THE FLYING FOX

BY W. F. ALDER

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THE FLYING FOX

BY

W. F. ALDER

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"THE LAGOON OF DESIRE"—"THE ISLE OF VANISHING MEN"—"FANGS OF THE BLUE," ETC.

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS AND DECORATIONS

BY

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M. N. G. Ap. 27-21.

The passing was but the affair
of an instant for—

The sluggish tide of the Pearl River lazily lapped the stone ramparts of the "Bund." Upon it's breast, huddled like chicks around a mothering hen, the sampans of Ah Foon, each the life-long home of a family of river people, gathered beneath the high flung stern of his great junk.

Canton, the city of a thousand smells, shook off the thrall of sleep. The deserted streets became thronged with hurrying humanity all bent upon a hasty breakfast. The coolies rose from their cold beds upon the flagstoned alleys and doorsteps to stretch their stiffened limbs and search among the folds of their dirty sash belts for enough copper cash to purchase a warming bowl of steaming soup from an itinerant restraunteur, who carried his whole establishment suspended from a yoke upon his calloused shoulders. Canton was awake.

On the river the teeming sampan life awak-

ened. A blue haze hovered over the myriad water craft for the women fanned into life the glowing warmth of the charcoal fires in the little pottery stoves. Yellow babies squalled lustily and infant mothers blithely ignored their offspring's howling and slid overside in the foul waters for their morning plunge.

On the great junk of Ah Foon the blue pellucid mist lifted languorously from a large bamboo pipe that protruded through the deck. A gong sounded melodiously from somewhere below and the coolies lying upon straw mats around the decks rose with much chatter and sluiced down their bronzed bodies with water dipped from the stream in long handled bamboo buckets.

A mile distant from the "Bund," within the old walled city lay the mansion of the trader. A single door set in an otherwise blank wall that towered hight above the heads of passersby, was the only entrance to the place. Above the door, set in jet mosaic upon a slab of mottled jade, was

the emblem of Ah Foon. It was the "chop"* of the "Flying Fox," a great black bat with wings outspread, the great vampire bat of the East Indies, where Ah Foon and his many fathers before him had carried on the trading and pearl fishing operations that had made the chop of the house a power to be reckoned with. For two hundred years the house of the Flying Fox had controlled the great pearling beds of the East Indies and there had been none to dispute their claim, for the fathers of Ah Foon had been men of iron and had brooked no interference.

With the coming of the day when the elder Ah Foon had gone to his reward amid much ceremony and mourning, there came a new regime, a new policy, for to Ah Foon the Younger had come a great sadness and an unbounded affection for a foreign devil.

It had happened when the fleet of sampans were hurrying homeward from the pearling grounds with much shell and many precious

*Chop—a sign or trade mark.

stones. Like vultures, the pirates of the southern coast had swooped down upon them and had scattered the sampans to the four winds, robbing them, murdering and stealing their women.

Overcome by numbers Ah Foon had fought a losing battle and had watched the seizure of Voice of Many Blossoms, his idolized wife, and Flower of Night, his infant daughter. Screaming curses upon the ancestors of the cut-throats, Ah Foon fought to rescue his dear ones but he was surrounded. Suddenly a great darkness smote him.

When he awakened he found himself lying upon a strange bed. It was a bed the like of which he had never before seen. Unlike his own in Canton it was wonderfully soft and was covered with snow-white linen. Bending over him when he first opened his eyes he saw a face. It was the face of a foreign devil but it smiled in brotherly love and spoke only of illimitable kindness.

A soft voice spoke to him in the language of his fathers. It told him where he was and that he was among friends. He was in the bed and home of John Dowling, the missionary, located in a little seacoast town which the pirates had attacked but who had been repulsed, leaving a number of their crew prisoners in the hands of the local mandarin.

The sampan of Ah Foon had drifted ashore where he was found after the pirates made their escape, by a member of the mission who with the aid of others had taken the wounded Ah Foon to the home of their beloved missionary.

In the days that followed Ah Foon gained strength and a great love. His many wounds he bore with stoic indifference while John Dowling nursed him back to health. Never before had Ah Foon received the thoughtful attention bestowed upon him by this kindly, patient, white man. He learned that the missionary was to be transferred to Canton and Ah Foon was glad.

In Canton he thought that he could repay the little man for his kindnesses.

One day while he was sitting upon the little flower-laden porch of the home of the missionary, he saw a long black ship swing around the point of the headland across the bay. It was a British destroyer come to demand punishment for the pirates lately captured. In the day that followed a young and very business-like officer, decked in a natty white uniform arranged with the Chinese governor for the execution of the nine culprits he had captured. The governor did not wish to punish these men, for their master had sent word of a large ransom for them but the white officer wished for no delay and ordered the thing done immediately. The long black guns of the battleship were pointing directly at the governor's house and he was afraid. He ordered the execution.

Many sailors came from the ship to mingle with the people of the town and witness the beheading. With their hands securely tied behind

them, the prisoners filed out into the courtyard of the *yamen to their doom.

The stalwart executioner came with shining sword to do his duty. He took a great pride in his work. He passed the great sword around for the people to heft and to examine. He was very proud.

Chen Wing, the leader of the pirate crew, chafed at the delay. He spat in disgust at what he considered unbecoming vanity of the executioner. He was a Chinese, a leader. He would show these white men how a Chinese could die.

"Bah," he said in guttural Cantonese, "cease this showing off, and get along with your business."

He spat again, this time on the feet of the executioner.

The executioner wheeled upon him in anger.

"Kneel, son of a thousand pigs," he roared, "and join the rotting carcasses of your fathers."

*Yamen—space within the walls of the headquarters of the governor.

He seized the sword from the hand of one of the sailors.

Chen Wing knelt as bidden, his face wreathed in a sardonic smile. There was a whirring swish of the swift falling blade that flashed like a band of silver light, a crackling smack and the head of Chen Wing leaped from his shoulders to roll almost to the feet of the wondering onlookers.

The executioner wiped the blade with calm vanity. It had been a clean stroke.

On the other side of the town, Ah Foon, in the house of John Dowling listened to the childish prattle of the motherless three-year-old Jane, whose great dark eyes looked into his with unquestioning confidence. She held out her arms to him to be held upon his knee and he smiled and lifted her to his lap. It was the beginning of a life-long companionship. A week later the junk of Ah Foon anchored in the bay. When it departed for Canton it carried the owner and John and Jane Dowling.

* * * * *

Passed three happy years. John Dowling worked among the people of Canton with untiring energy. Came the grievous affliction of the repellant black plague which moved like a reaper's scythe throughout the swarming populace. Worn out by his labors among the stricken people, his frail body succumbed to the scourge and was piled along with many others on one of the pyres of the necropolis outside the city walls.

Ah Foon was untouched by the stalking death. When the sickness crept upon him the missionary called Ah Foon to him and intrusted to his care his only earthly possessions, little Jane and his much thumbed leather covered Bible.

Ah Foon's eyes lighted with joy for he had come to love the little white skinned girl as his own. He took Jane to the mansion guarded by the emblem of his House. When Jane was carried through the narrow doorway she became the adopted daughter of the Flying Fox and was called Quai Fa, which is Chinese for Flower of

Kindness, in memory of the nature of her father.

As she grew in mind and body, the memory of his wife and own daughter faded in the dimness of the past and Ah Foon loved Jane, the Flower of Kindness, with an all-consuming tenderness. His happiest hours were spent in the azalia shaded courtyard of the mansion where Quai Fa played the table harp for him, or told him of funny things that happened in the household. When he was at home they were inseparable. Fearful lest some injury befall her, Ah Foon never allowed her to go outside the garden wall. From the time she became his daughter, she saw nothing of the outside world until she reached her eighteenth year.

Her beauty was the talk of many households and many were the proposals of marriage that Ah Foon had for her. These he put aside angrily, saying:

"This is the daughter of my white brother. It is not good that blood be mixed."

Then he would fall silent in fearful contem-

plation of the time when she should feel the mating call within her breast. With a sigh he would put the dark thought from him and would call her, fondle her with great tenderness, his eyes wonderfully soft with love of her.

At these times Quai Fa sensed that he had something on his mind that worried him. Her intuition told her that, and she would caress him and by her girlish gaiety, lure him from the depths of his depression. Happy was the House of Ah Foon.

* * * * *

With the passing of the years the fame of the beauty of Quai Fa travelled afar and the frequent allusions made to her were a source of worry to Ah Foon. Never was she allowed to go unattended from the precincts of the house.

Gathered for their yearly meeting, the Guild of the Beggars came to Canton. It was their wont to collect tithes from the merchants and wealthy men of the city. Seldom were they refused. Some of their number waited upon Ah

Foon to collect the yearly offering and one of these, a youth of her own age cast amorous eyes upon Quai Fa who was in the garden with her father when the beggars entered.

Ah Foon caught the look and in anger bade the crew begone. They left the garden without the usual generous gift, without understanding the reason for it's being withheld. They hurried to the hovel which was their headquarters where, with much chatter and denunciation they told their chief of the insult to their fraternity. Lo Fang heard the story with narrowing lids.

"The tithes shall be paid," was his comment.

With this thought in mind he dismissed the others from the room, calling, after they had left, a meeting of his fellow chiefs to find a means of enforcing payment. After lengthy argument they arrived at a conclusion. They would wait their time. When suitable opportunity arrived Quai Fa, the Flower of Kindness, would be spirited away. They would hold her for ransom.

Gee Foo, who sat in the shade of the Great Wall casting the dust of the roadside upon his head, thus to excite the sympathies of onlookers, was sent to watch the doorway of the Fox to spy upon the household and report the goings and comings of Quai Fa.

With her first absence from the house unattended would fall the blow. Grief then, would shroud the household and many taels would find their way from the coffers of Ah Foon to the treasury of the beggars.

With the blooming of the azalias came the Feast of the Lanterns and the palatial temple of Ning Po was made ready for the festivities. The priestly scribes gathered from afar to write prayer papers for the faithful. The gong within the temple, mellowed in tone by slow marching centuries, boomed it's sonorous appeal, calling all to the worship of their fathers. Within the homes of the wealthy there was much feasting and the gardens were gay with lanterns.

As the servants made ready the spacious gar-

dens of her home, Quai Fa listened to their gossip. They had been to the temple to watch it's furbishing for the ceremony of the morrow. Closely Quai Fa questioned them, her eyes wide with wonder at their tales of splendor, her heart throbbing with desire to see the ceremony.

She hastened to her father with a plea to be allowed to go. Ah Foon sat in thoughtful silence for a moment then gravely shook his head. The space within the temple walls was small. There would be tens of thousands at the temple to watch the ceremony. It was not good that Quai Fa, his daughter, rub elbows with the poor and needy.

"No, my daughter, it is not well that you should go," was his reply.

Quai Fa drooped her head and pouted. Few were her requests that were ungranted. Appealingly she raised her eyes to those of Ah Foon who looked at her in sadness as he again shook his head. Quai Fa turned from him with tears in her eyes to go to her bower in the corner of

the garden where she forgot her disappointment for a time, as she fed Tao, her pet goldfish, who took the crumbs of rice cake she offered, from her fingers.

On the opposite side of the city, on the Shameen, where live the foreign devils, sat a young white man under the grateful coolness of an electric ceiling fan. He was on the hotel veranda and gazed with bored apathy at the street life on the "Bund" opposite, across the narrow canal.

A cigar drooped from his listless hand, it's vaporous blue smoke scattered by the draught of the fan overhead. Bruce Denton's thoughts were as scattered as the smoke.

"So this is China," he ruminated. "The land of romance and mystery,—Humph, I've got another name for it. All I've seen is dirt and squalling naked brats. I'll never get a thrill out of this country,—I guess I'll beat it." This last he said aloud.

It was overheard by a casual friend who had

just stepped out on the veranda from the bar-room.

"Decided to beat it, eh? Why the haste? You haven't been here a week."

Bruce raised the cigar to his lips and bit the end off of it savagely.

"Yes, I'm going from here," quoth he. "I had China all doped out as a land where a fellow could get some kick out of life, but let me tell you, old man, it's only one colossal smell."

"Have you ever been over to the walled city?" inquired his friend.

"Yes, once," answered Bruce. "That was enough. Nay, Roderick, I'm on my flitting way, believe me."

"You may find something of interest there in the city tomorrow. They tell me that Ning Po temple is all dolled up for the Feast of the Lanterns and as it only happens once a year—it's usually quite some party."

Denton's eyes opened slightly at this and his

apathetic face lighted with some semblance of animation.

"Whereabouts is this aforesaid temple?" he inquired.

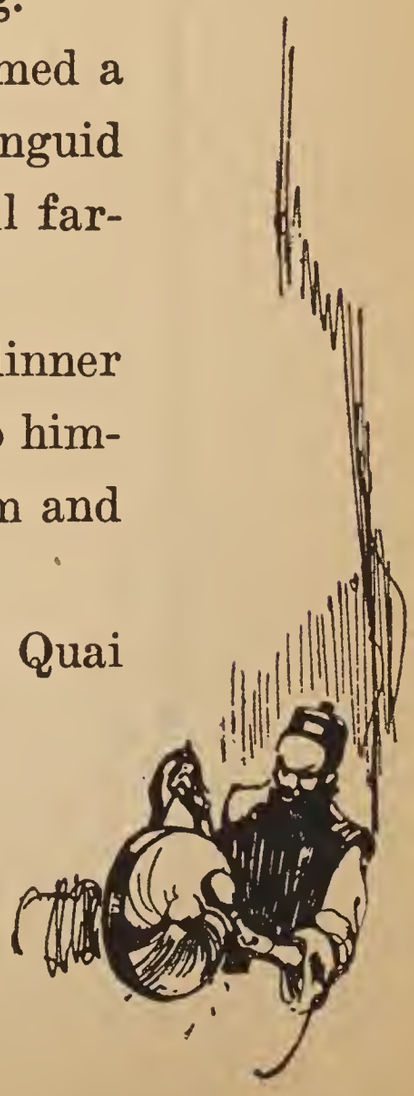
"I'll be hanged if I know, but your chair coolies can take you there—all you have to do is to tell them. I wouldn't miss this if I were you—I hope to be able to get over there tomorrow myself."

"Thanks, I won't," Bruce replied, as his friend swung off the veranda and started down the driveway. To his parting, "I'll see you tomorrow," Bruce answered, "Yes,—so long."

Within the hotel the dressing gong boomed a dissonant summons; Bruce rose with languid reluctance to obey the stern mandate of all far-eastern hotels.

"This dolling up in 'soup and fish' for dinner every night is sure the bunk," he quoted to himself as he entered the lift to go to his room and his afternoon bath.

In the House of the Fox, the dreams of Quai



Fa were of a splendrous temple where great warriors and beautiful ladies strolled in the shade of the fragrant azalias. When she awakened in the morning these visions of her sleep came to her anew, and by mid-forenoon she had summoned enough courage to put into action the plan that she had formed. It was her first direct disobedience to her father's wishes, and though fearful of his displeasure her mind was set. She would see the Temple and the Feast of the Lanterns.

Ah Foon was away for the day, gone to inspect his new yacht, for of late ill reports were coming from the islands. Li Chang, his twin brother, and to whom Ah Foon had intrusted the management of the pearl fishing fleet, had been running things with a high hand. The new yacht was designed by Ah Foon for flying trips to and from the islands, that he be able to take more active part in the management of his great pearling fleets. On this day was the yacht ready for her trial, her shining engines were attuned

to their greatest effort, for the contractors had promised Ah Foon a speedy boat. At noon were the yellow waters of the river to be churned into mad frothing by the two great screws of the new "Sui On." Great was the pride of Ah Foon in his new cruiser.

With her mind decided Quai Fa called her servants to her and ordered her chair. At first she was met with almost tearful refusal for they loved her, but dared not incur the wrath of Ah Foon, whom they knew would not sanction her leaving unattended. Quai Fa stamped her foot petulantly and demanded by what right her servants dared disobey the command of their mistress. Fearfully, they brought her the chair which she entered like a queen.

"I wish to be taken to the Temple," she told them. "And make haste."

As her coolies jogged along their voices lifted in sing song cadence, warning those who choked the narrow thoroughfares of the coming of the daughter of Ah Foon and the way was cleared

before them. The people of the streets gazed in pleasurable surprise as the golden chair passed, for tales of the beauty of Quai Fa had travelled far and the chop of the Flying Fox emblazoned on it's sides was known and revered throughout the city.

In the hovel of the Guild there was great excitement, for Gee Foo, the watcher by the gate, had brought the news. Quickly were the hatchet men dispatched to the gates of the temple.

As her chair progressed, the narrow streets became almost impassable with the great throngs that were going to the Temple. The shrill babble of their voices rose in a very avalanche of sound. Finally the way became so choked that progress was impossible and the way was further blocked by the chair of a foreign devil, inextricably entangled in the milling human vortex.

After what seemed hours to Bruce he arrived at the gate of the Temple where the ear torturing din of the discordant gongs and cymbals

combined with the soul shattering shriek of the shrilling fiddles, became maddening.

The din, which to the celestial ear was sweetest harmony, was to him a torture and he covered his ears to shut it out, at the same time shouting to his coolies to take him to a quiet place. In the lane his chair opened through the chattering mob, the coolies of Quai Fa found egress also and soon they entered a quiet street far from the precincts of the temple. Here, her coolies broke into a trot for by this route it was a long way to the house of Ah Foon. As her chair passed that of Bruce they gazed at each other for the moment, blankly, in surprise. Quai Fa in wonder at the strange handsome face and queer garments of the boy. He, in amazement at the beautiful white girl in modish Chinese garb. The passing was but the affair of an instant for Quai Fa's coolies were moving at a sharp trot, anxious to get their little charge home in safety. Bruce leaned back in his chair the victim of conflicting emotions; one of these was to follow her and find

out who she was. Her chair was now some distance ahead and he gazed after it in wonder and speculation. As he gazed he saw something that made him sit bolt upright in his chair. Far down the road there was a crowd of beggars which as her chair came abreast of them became a blurred mass of struggling bodies.

His coolies broke into hoarse cries of surprise and anger and he urged them to a dead run to the melee. As he neared them he sprang from the chair and silently went into action. His hard fists smacked viciously upon the snarling faces of the beggars, who, taken by surprise, were for the moment paralyzed. Then with wild yells they turned from the chair coolies and rushed Bruce enmasse.

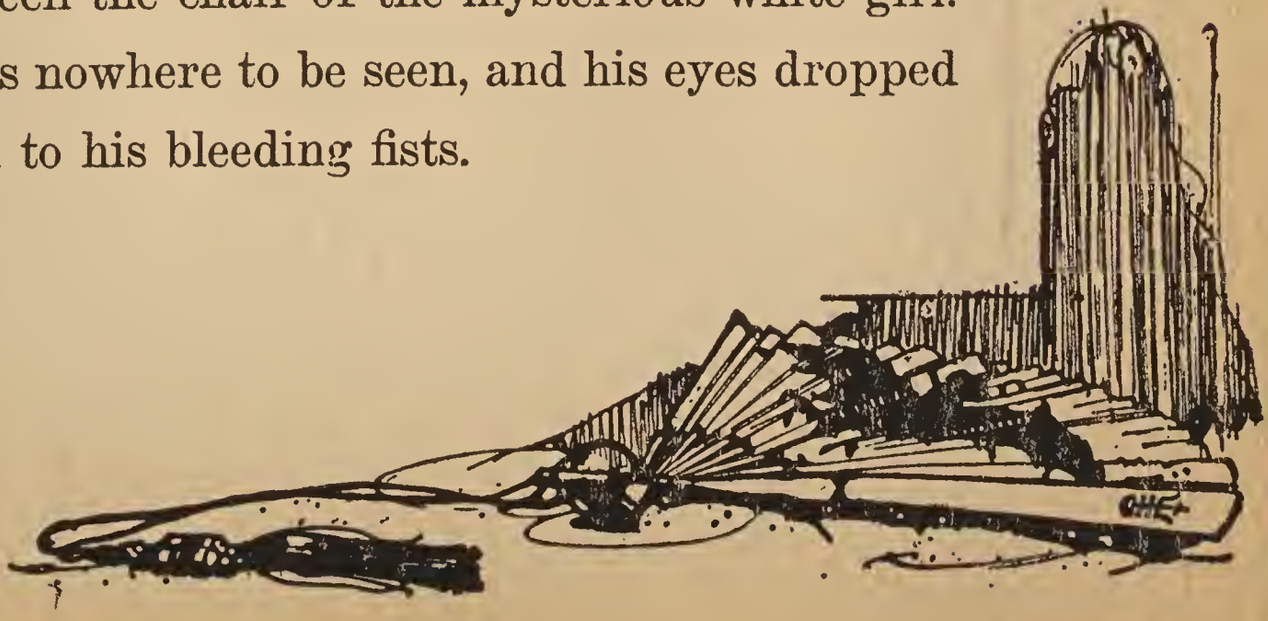
"Oh! what a bird of a shindig this is going to be," chuckled Bruce through closed teeth. "By way of introduction I present this with my compliments," remarked Bruce smilingly, as his right smashed with the impact of a mule's kick into the demoniac face of the nearest Chinaman.

With the blow the street rose up with unaccountable celerity and smacked the shaven poll of the beggar who immediately lapsed into deep slumber. Then suddenly the air rained fists—it was lurid with fists—fists that came from everywhere and always landed somewhere, somewhere where they hurt the most.

Bruce revelled in the glory of it, until one by one the beggars gave up fighting this whirlwind of a foreign devil and disappeared. As the dust of battle cleared away Bruce looked around the street for more worlds to conquer.

"Humph! just when I begin to get into action they all beat it."

He gazed with a grin at his own chair coolies who regarded him in wondering awe. Then he looked at his fists. They were a sorry mess. From his fists his eyes lifted to where he had last seen the chair of the mysterious white girl. It was nowhere to be seen, and his eyes dropped again to his bleeding fists.



"If it were not for these two bunged up babies," and he looked at the fists in compassionate regard, "it would all seem like a dream to me. It will take six dollars worth of iodine," quoth he, "to put the twins into shape again." He fished out a broken-backed cigar from his pocket as he said it. As he lighted it his eyes caught sight of something on the ground and he stooped to pick it up. It was a lady's fan. He spread it and gazed in wonderment at the design he saw upon it,—it was the "chop" of The Flying Fox. As he handled the dainty thing, opening and closing its ivory leaves there diffused about it a subtle perfume the like of which he had never before experienced. Vainly he tried to classify it.

There was an indefinable, intangible sweetness surrounding that fan that conjured at once the lurking sadness of the tuberose and the aura of all China's mystery. He strode to his chair and stepped into it, placing the fan in his inner coat

pocket, telling the coolies, "Let's get from here, playmates, I would visit the hotel."

The coolies upon hearing the word "hotel" lifted the chair upon their shoulders, commenced their chant and jogged away.

Within the hour Bruce emerged from the British dispensary, his knuckles nut brown with iodine. His face was clouded with perplexity and as he stepped upon the veranda he was greeted by his friend of yesterday who asked if he had visited the temple.

"I sure did" was Bruce's reply. "And I want to say that yesterday, I lied. I said I was going to beat it—but I was dead wrong,—there's a certain person I've got to find out something about in this mans' town and I am just the little sleuth that can do it."

"What's it all about," came the question.

"Aha! That's the secret," rejoined Bruce as he turned to go inside,—his hand feeling for the fan. His friend saw the movement and added jokingly.

"It isn't anything that affects the old pumping station, is it?"

Bruce flushed slightly and answered.

"Nope, the old heart is still hitting on all four, but you never can tell." This, as he slid through the open door.

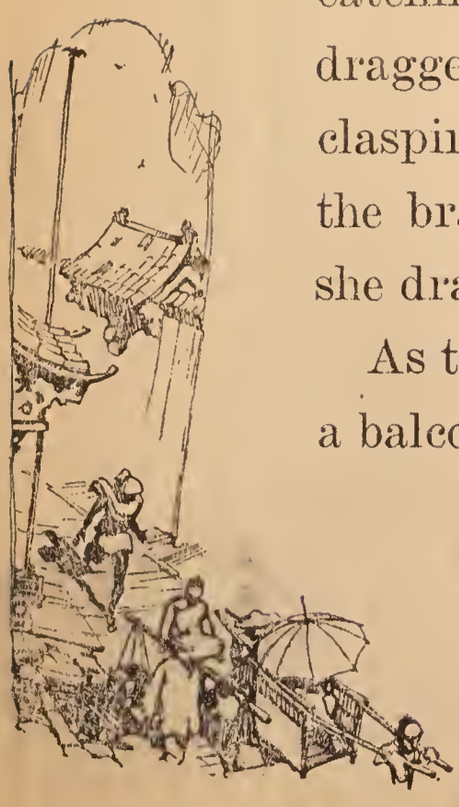
In the garden of Ah Foon, Quai Fa told the story of her thrilling adventure to Tao, in breathless excitement. She confided to Tao how the wonderful, strange young man who was so unbelievably handsome sprang to her rescue and drove the thousands and thousands of bad coolie men away from her. Her lonely little heart found happiness in the thought of this strange man and Quai Fa fell in love. Tao lost interest in the tale and sulked in the bottom of the crystal bowl. After upbraiding him for his disinterest she went to her couch beneath the azalias where with head resting upon her little porcelain pillow, she fell asleep.

In the late afternoon Ah Foon returned from the river. The Sui On surpassed his fondest

hopes and he was in happy mood. In his sleeve pocket he carried a present for Quai Fa which he planned to give her in lieu of the visit to the temple he had denied her. He found her asleep and stood watching her, the while fumbling in his sleeve. Quai Fa was dreaming. She was dreaming of a strange white face that had been indelibly impressed upon her heart in one fleeting instant. Though in slumber, her sweet face was wreathed in a smile and Ah Foon's eyes lighted with his love for her. He sat down on the divan at her feet.

With the act she awakened. As their eyes met Ah Foon drew from his capatious sleeve a golden bracelet, which as Quai Fa raised her arms he slipped upon her left wrist. With a little cry of pleasure and thankfulness she gazed at the gift for the moment speechless in her admiration of the bracelet which was of solid gold and very heavy, then drawing her feet underneath her, with arms outspread, she leaped upon Ah Foon and showered him with caresses.

They both were unaware of the silent approach of Fong, one of the servants. Fong was the oldest member of the household. Faithfully had he served Ah Foon the elder and had watched the growing up of the son, Ah Foon, with loving eyes. Quai Fa he idolized. Come now to call them to the evening meal he was loth to interrupt them in their happiness and he watched them for the moment, his wrinkled old face wreathed in a paternal smile. Soon Ah Foon discovered him and looked at him in laughter, pointing him out to Quai Fa and asking her if she were not ashamed to be seen in such prodigal abandonment. To this Quai Fa replied not a word, but rising from the divan, catching one of Ah Foon's hands in hers she dragged her father to where Fong stood and clasping his hands in hers, the one over which the bracelet had slipped down from the wrist, she dragged them playfully into the house.



As they entered the dining place which was on a balcony overlooking the garden, one of the un-

der servants brought the basin filled with warm scented water and two hot towels. After dipping their hands into the basin they dried them on the towels, then went to the table and sat down to their evening meal, with Fong in silent attendance. As the meal progressed Ah Foon told her of the new yacht, of its great speed and lavish appointments, and Quai Fa listened in rapturous attention.

Outside, trotting down the noisesome street, his bare feet making no sound on the cobbled roadway, came a messenger. As he neared the doorway of Ah Foon he stopped and, after searching in the folds of his broad sash, brought forth a red envelope which he handed to the keeper of the door. Bidding him wait on a seat in front of the devil gate, that high partition just within the doorway of every Chinese home, and by virtue of which one must take a circuitous path in entering, which bad devils cannot do, the keeper carried the missive to his master.

Ah Foon opened the red envelope and read the note without change of expression though to him it contained ill news. Dismissing the bearer of the note curtly he resumed his dinner unruffled. News had come from Lucipara. It was a letter from his twin brother who, much to Ah Foon's disquietude, boasted of having wiped out the pearling fleet of one foreign devil, Clarke by name, together with many of his men. In times before Li Chang, his twin, had resorted to violence, like their fathers had before them, only to bring upon his head the wrath of Ah Foon who councilled less harsh methods.

Times had changed and foreign governments frowned upon such overt acts. But it was not wholly on account of this that Ah Foon councilled other methods. In years before he had tasted the bitterness and sorrow that fighting brought. Ah Foon was a merchant, a trader in pearls, and bloodshed was a thing not in his ken.

"As soon as the Sui On could be provisioned

he would go to Lucipara and stop, once and for all, this spilling of blood,'' he murmured to himself. Also, would he take Quai Fa for life would be very dull without her.

Together they rose from the table and went to the garden, where under the soft light of an orange lantern she lulled his anger at Li Chang with the piquant music of her table harp. The nightingales in the trees above them listened for the moment then swelled their little throats in song. Ah Foon's troubles vanished in the magic of the moonlight and the song.

On the roof of the Victoria, high above the noise of the city where the blatant orchestras of the myriad restaurants tried to outdo each other with their soul racking din, Bruce Denton nursed ten sore knuckles and an all consuming desire to find the mysterious white girl who carried herself with the air of the dowager empress.

"Lord! Wasn't she wonderful! Her skin was like white satin tinged with rose—and her eyes! Such eyes!'' he murmured to himself.

Reaching into his inner pocket he drew out the little fan.

The faint perfume that seemed to float around it and somehow did not seem to really come from it, seemed to him as intangible and as sweet as the girl of the golden chair. Possibly it was the perfume or perhaps the moon that had something to do with it, or maybe it was both, for at that moment Bruce realized, willy-nilly, that he was in love. As the thought came to him he sat up with a start saying to himself:

"Ye Gods! B. D. you are going nutty, you see a girl once and the old pumpin' station goes pitty pat—Oh, but Lord wasn't she beautiful! I'll find that little lady tomorrow, and whether the governor likes it or not, we will make dear old Mater, Madame." With the thought Bruce rose and strode up and down the broad platform on the roof.

It was the first time he had ever really lost his heart and he felt light, buoyantly light, and the subtle perfume of the fan scented the air

about him like dew-kissed honey-suckle; boredom was gone. He became inexpressably happy in his contemplation of her beauty and the sweetness of the little oval face that had burned itself into his consciousness a few short hours before.

Long into the night Bruce sat in the little pergola on the Victoria roof. The hush of satiety had long mantled the noisy city below him when he arose to go. With one last glance at the red and green lights of the shipping on the river and a long speculative look, punctuated with a kiss wafted to her, somewhere in the city, he slowly went down stairs. Bruce was profoundly in love.

Bruce overslept and rose late. After a hasty bath and a still more hurried breakfast, he summoned his chair-coolies to go to the walled-city. He showed the fan to the coolies, and asked them if they could find the owner. One glance at the chop of the Flying Fox emblazoned on its surface was sufficient. With vehement

nods they told him to get into the chair, and made off. Thirty minutes later, they set the chair down in the roadway before the doorway of the Flying Fox. Within the garden, Quai Fa lay day-dreaming on her couch. She was dreaming of her hero who was fighting a great fire-breathing dragon, weaponless, and laughed as he strangled it into submission.

After a moment's hesitation outside the doorway, Bruce rose from the chair and entered, to be challenged at the devil-gate by the keeper, who turned Bruce away, as he had done many tourists in the past, thinking him to be a mere curiosity seeker. No word had come to the house of Ah Foon of the events of yesterday, for to her chair-coolies Quai Fa had commanded forgetfulness under pain of dire punishment, and they, fearful of Ah Foon's wrath, kept silent. The keeper of the gate was obdurate, and waved Bruce angrily away. Reentering the chair, he told his coolies to move on.

The way led down the narrow street along the

garden-wall of the house of Ah Foon. It was a busy thoroughfare. Bruce wanted quiet and time to think. As they came to the street end of the wall, Bruce saw that it turned down one side of a narrow lane overhung with willows. The lane was deserted, for on both sides it was flanked with blank walls. On the right were the walls of Ah Foon's gardens. On the left were the walls of the government yamen. Telling the coolies to take him down the lane, he resolved to sit there and have a quiet smoke,—to figure out his next move.

Midway down the lane, he bade the coolies let him down, and leaned back in the chair to study the situation. He gazed with speculative interest at the ten-foot wall on his right. Somewhere within those walls was his heart's desire. As he gazed, a wild idea gripped him. He would get inside those walls. Giving no thought to the consequences, he made up his mind. He would scale that wall. He called the coolies to him, and in spite of their determined warnings, which he

angrily deprecated, made them place the chair upright upon its end, against the wall. With the coolies steadying the chair, he clambered to the tiled top of the wall.

As his head and eyes cleared its top, he gazed around the spacious gardens in wondering surprise. Before him was a celestial paradise, and just beneath him, slumbering on a teakwood couch, inlaid with pearl, lay the lady of his dreams. She was asleep. Bruce almost stopped breathing. He could hear the thumping of his heart so plainly that he thought it surely must awaken her.

She was exquisitely beautiful. Her long dark hair was drawn tightly over her little head and braided down her back, and over her ear, fastened to her hair, there glowed a freshly-cut crimson hybiscus. As he looked at her, drinking in every line of her beautiful face, Quai Fa smiled slightly and stirred in her sleep. She was dreaming of him and his conquest of the dragon. Bruce could restrain himself no longer. He

As he looked at her Quai Fa
stirred in her sleep.

reached out and plucked an azalia-bud from the tree which grew near the wall, then, after a moment's hesitation tossed it to her, striking her lightly on the face. Quai Fa wakened with a start and looked up. Her eyes met those of Bruce. They opened wide in wonder and her face became wreathed with a glad smile.

"I was just dreaming of you," she said naively in Chinese. Bruce did not understand.

"Do you speak English?" he queried.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "I study English every day, and French too."

"What is your name," he answered.

"My name is Quai Fa in Chinese."

"What is it in English?" Bruce returned.

"Flower of Kindness," said Quai Fa.

"Flower of Kindness—what a beautiful name!" Bruce murmured to himself, continuing aloud, "I want to see you. Can't I come in and talk?"

Quai Fa looked around the garden in fearful speculation. She realized that this would never

do, for her father never allowed her to be alone with anyone. As she looked, she saw Fong approaching with a pot of tea. No one must see her visitor, for she knew that, should he be discovered, steps would be taken to hide her from the foreign devil.

"You must go quickly for Fong is coming!"

Bruce gazed in the direction that she was looking, and through the thick-growing shrubs in the garden saw a figure moving.

"I will come back tomorrow," he whispered, "Goodbye, Flower of Kindness, until tomorrow."

"Goodbye, my warrior-man, but please come to me again," she whispered.

Bruce dropped down behind the wall just in time to escape being seen by Fong. The coolies made the chair ready for him, and he stepped into it like one in a dream.

"Goodbye, my warrior-man, but please come to me again," ran through his brain in a burning stream of bliss.

"Oh, she does care for me, she does care for me!" he sang to himself. "She wants to see me again. Well, she will see me again. Flower of Kindness. She's the dearest little thing in the world! Gee whiz, but I'll make her happy some day."

The coolies lifted the chair and bore him down the lane, without his being aware of the fact. They listened to him as he hummed gladly to himself, with knowing smiles, for the Chinese loves romance.

Bruce did not become aware of externals until they were in the center of the seething business section of the city. The chair was stopped abruptly, for the street at this point was crowded with a jostling throng of people which effectually blocked it. Close beside him was the entrance of a great jewelry store, and as he looked into it, Bruce conceived of an idea—he would buy her a token of his love. With youthful impetuosity, he leaped from the chair and disappeared through the wide door-

way of the shop. Ten minutes later, he came out again with the air of one very much satisfied with the way things were going.

In his pocket-book, taking the place of many Honkong dollars was a diamond-studded locket, and dainty neck-chain of purest gold. This, he planned to take to the hotel, there to insert within it the head cut from a kodak picture of himself, across which he intended writing the words "I love you." Then, he went back to the hotel where he was content to sit alone and just think. Nothing mattered now. Nothing else counted but his love. The hours dragged on leaden feet, for tomorrow morning was a long way off, but Bruce was happy.

Where just two days previous, life had been a terrific bore, it was now well worth the living.

"Gee, but it's great to be in love!" he murmured to himself.

To Quai Fa in the garden, life became a wondrous thing. Quai Fa, although she did not know it, had been lonesome, there had been

something lacking, and now that void was filled. The heart hunger that had smoldered within her now broke into leaping flame and she sang with the joy of it.

At times, her sweet face saddened, when some bad goblin conjured up a thought that her warrior-man might not come again, but her faith gave this the lie, and her smile bloomed again. She gave to Tao the innermost secrets of her heart, and he became jealous, and took to sulking in the bottom of his crystal home when she approached, for, before the coming of the white man, Tao had enjoyed the fullest warmth of her affections.

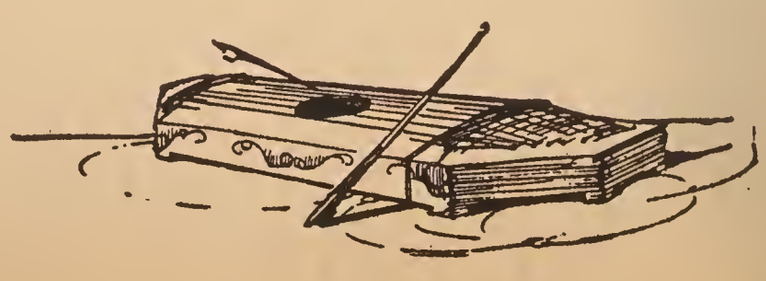
Quai Fa noticed the change in his demeanor and upbraided him. Her little heart was bursting with joy and she felt that all should share her happiness.

Down on the busy river, the "Sui On" lay beside the wharf, glistening in her new white paint with Ah Foon in daily attendance, personally supervising the fitting up of her cabins.

One of these he set apart for Quai Fa, spending many taels upon its decoration. It was a boudoir for a princess, for Ah Foon's love of her knew no bounds. Within the week, the "Sui On" would leave the yellow waters of the river to breast the sapphire seas of the Southern Islands. Then would come the reckoning with Li Chang, his brother. Ah Foon desired not pearls that were bought with blood.

His supervision of the work of outfitting the new boat kept him on her until late in the afternoon, and it was not until the shadows of the garden were becoming violet in the soft twilight that Ah Foon sought out Quai Fa in her favorite nook. She was playing a love song, softly, on the harp.

Quai Fa was in a dreamy mood, her eyes half closed, humming the air gently as the little bamboo hammers rose and fell in her tapering hands. Ah Foon gave no warning of his coming for his felt soled shoes made no sound upon the close cropped grass. He stopped to listen, for Quai



Fa was playing with the inspiration of her love. Never had Ah Foon heard her play so beautifully.

It was the witching hour. That momentary pause that, cheating nightfall of a moment when the sun has set, awakens the evening breezes, stirring into low whisperings a chorus of myriad voices: The hour that Ah Foon loved most of all, for he loved to people it with fancies which come only with this hour of repose. As the soft melody of the love song stole into his soul, the twilight came to him with new meaning and he became dimly conscious that this was the mating hour of Day with Night; that soon he, in the afternoon of Life, would enter the shadows. The tender thing singing the love song to which he listened, was in the morning of her life, and that while he entered the shadows, she would enter the gladsome light of full mid-day.

With the coming of the thought that he must die and leave her alone, uncared for, Ah Foon became panic-stricken. In the love song that

she played, he somehow sensed the heart-hunger of the girl, that would not be denied. Many times, when transient thoughts of this had come to him, he had passed them off, but now, coming upon her suddenly, his subtle Chinese brain sensed the mating-call and he was afraid. Slowly the idea formed that he must find a son worthy of her love and, of heirdom to his fortune. At that moment, Quai Fa was again assailed by that ever-conscious latent fear that Bruce would not come to her again. She stopped playing, lost in a transport of doubt. Like pearls, two great tears welled into her eyes and ran down her cheeks, her little heart bursting with love-longing. As she ceased playing, Ah Foon shook off the gloom of his foreboding, and gently went to her. She raised her face to him, moist-eyed and tremulous.

Ah Foon gathered her into his arms, tenderly questioning her sadness, and carried her up and down the garden snuggled against his breast, her arms around his neck, her head resting on his

shoulder. He was at a loss to find a reason for her unhappiness and he questioned her, but Quai Fa fearful, both at having disobeyed him and of the hurt she knew it would bring to him, held silence.

He sought to comfort her by telling her of the coming trip on the new boat to the Islands, and Quai Fa became gripped with a blank despair, for she knew that this would separate her from her lover, and she refused to be comforted. At a loss to know what ailed the child, Ah Foon promised her many gifts to lure her from her sadness. Slowly Quai Fa's face brightened, and Ah Foon breathed again. As they ate the evening meal, he gave her glowing accounts of the Islands and the strange people that she would see. He told her of the pearling boats, and, so graphic was his description, Quai Fa listened with rapt attention.

But when the meal was over, and her father was engaged in lengthy discussion with some of his lieutenants, Quai Fa crept to her apart-

ment to be alone with her thoughts of Bruce. Her dreams that night were of a great boat that had wings that carried her away from Bruce despite his efforts to rescue her, and she wakened unrefreshed at daybreak, eager to be in the garden to wait his coming.

As the hour of his coming drew near, Quai Fa sent the servants from her saying that she wished to be alone. She lay upon the divan listening for some sound indicating his approach and soon she heard the scraping sound he made in clambering up the wall. In coquettish spirit, she feigned being asleep, watching him through half-shut lids. Bruce had the locket and chain in his hand; the locket open. This, he tossed into her lap, calling her softly as he threw it. She caught the locket with one hand as it was slipping to the ground and looked at it with a little cry of glad surprise.

"You must wear it for me always," he told her. This she promised to do, and suited the word to the action by putting the thin gold chain

around her neck, and dropping the locket which she snapped closed, down inside her heavy black silk jacket, where it rested snugly against her heart.

Anxious to know more of her, he drew from her the story of her life, but found therein something that he could not explain. She said her father's name was Ah Foon, but of her mother, she could tell nothing. Perplexed, but no whit the less in love, he pondered on her parentage. He noted that her eyes were straight, and that her hair was long and of a deep red-brown, and not the coarse jet-black of the true Chinese. As they talked, his infatuation grew, and he told her of himself, and of the great land from which he had come.

Three days followed with three happy meetings, each of longer or shorter duration, according to the comings and goings of the servants, in which they tried to plan a means of winning Ah Foon's sanction for their courtship. Bruce was for going to him direct and staking all upon the

open avowal of his love. This, Quai Fa would not sanction, for she feared that Ah Foon might in anger put an end to the happy meetings, and she counciled patience. She would find a way, she promised.

Came the evening of the day of the last visit. Ah Foon came into the garden to find her, his rotund face beaming in happiness. All was in readiness. The "Sui On" was lying in mid-river with throbbing boilers, under full steam. Calling her servants to him, he bade them gather up the things she would need upon the voyage, and take them to the cruiser. To Quai Fa, he said, "We shall have dinner tonight, on board the "Sui On", on our way to Honkong and the Islands. In ten days, we shall be in Ambon and you shall see the great pearling fleets at work."

Taken by surprise, she answered nothing, shocked into numbed fear of losing Bruce. "She must get him word," she told herself, and tell him she was going. "But how to reach him?"

After a moment's thought, during which Ah

Foon, his mind busy on the details of getting away, turned to give directions for the servants during his absence, she decided to leave Bruce a note.

While her father was busy with his affairs, she stole into the house and, taking a brush and slab of ink from the great table on which he did his writing, she wrote Bruce of her going and begged him not to forget her, for she surely would return. Of her love she wrote with charming naivette. Sealing the missive in a long, narrow envelope in which she also placed a jade medallion given to her on one of her birthdays by Ah Foon, Quai Fa went directly to the garden wall, where Bruce was wont to talk to her.

Standing upon the divan, she reached up and placed it on the wall, secure in the knowledge that he would find it on the morrow. An hour later found her at the dinner table on the Sui On, half enjoying, half fearful of, the strange sensation of the movement of the boat. She and

Ah Foon sat upon the deck late into the night as the staunch cruiser plowed its way down the broad, winding channel of the river.

That night, a strange oppression as of some foreboding or presentment of evil came to Bruce. He strove to shake it off, without avail, and he went to a sleepless bed. In the morning, he started for the city before the accustomed hour, and throwing caution to the winds, climbed the wall much before the appointed time. The divan was deserted. The whole garden seemed to have a desolate aspect. It was as though its life were gone. He could hear the servants chattering at their duties, though none of them were in sight. He climbed a little higher, the better to see the whole of the grounds, and his hand, in reaching for a firmer hold, touched the envelope which lay upon the inner angle of the tile coping. Quickly he seized and opened it. The jade medallion slipped from it into his hand. He turned it over and over, speculating on its meaning.

He had learned, during his stay in China, of the meaning of jade. To the Chinese it is emblematic of repose and constancy. He tore the envelope down its length, and drew from it the note. As he read it, black despair engulfed him, and he slid down to the ground in agonized dismay. Quai Fa had told him to await her return. She had not told him of her destination. His hands were tied. He had no means of ascertaining wither she was bound.

He folded the note, and put it, together with the medallion in his pocket book, lighted a meditative cigar for solace, saying to the coolies the one word, "Hotel."

These had come to hold a great liking for him. for he paid them well and they respected him for his prowess as a fighter and were solicitous for his success in the wooing of Quai Fa. As Bruce stepped into the chair, they exchanged covert speculative glances, for they knew by his demeanor, that something had gone wrong. He went back to the hotel to sit and await her re-

turn through days that passed, snail-like, in their progress.

Among the guests that came and went, Bruce found a few interesting people, but one of these interested him more deeply than the others. This was a pearl and diamond buyer, Jacobs, by name, who had to tell, many reminiscences of his travels. He had just returned from the Islands where he had been seeking pearls. Now he was come to Canton to complete his purchases.

As Bruce listened to the tales of the pearling fleets, he was seized with the desire to visit these gem-beds of the seas and taste the romance of the life. He learned that two weeks would suffice to take him there, and he thought to go, spend a few days, and return to Canton. By that time, Quai Fa surely would return. He left Canton that night for Honkong, where he secured passage for Ambon, which, Jacobs informed him, was the center of the industry for the northern area.

The "Sui On" going direct and making no stops en route raised Ambon the morning of the

tenth day out, and, upon landing, Ah Foon went directly to his toko, or store, which one of his lieutenants maintained both as a trading and forwarding post. The Chinaman in charge was much surprised at the unheralded coming of Ah Foon, his master, who immediately commanded that his presence in the vicinity be kept secret. It was Ah Foon's purpose to learn first-hand of conditions in the Islands before taking to task his high-handed brother. A week or two spent in quiet investigation would bear much fruit. Ah Foon took up his abode in the toko, where Quai Fa was very happy in her new surroundings, though sweetly sorrowful at times when thinking of her lover.

Here, in Ambon, Ah Foon heard the story of the wiping out of Clarke, who had lost the major portion of his fleet of luggers and many of his men in pitched battle with the forces of Li Chang, at whose mast-heads flew the emblem of the Flying Fox. It was a bitter Clarke that sat daily in the European Club in Ambon, drowning

his rage and losses with copious draughts of "square face" gin. He vowed vengeance, and also that he was "through." He was too old, he said, to make the fight he knew to be necessary to maintain sufficient hold upon the pearling-beds to make the venture profitable. He would sell what remained of the fleet to some younger man to whom fighting was a pleasure.

The hoarse rumble of the Dutch steamer, Schouten, coming from Singapore arrested further cogitation on these lines, for the arrival of the monthly steamer signalized the coming of mail, fresh provisions, and new faces. When the steamer docked, the town turned out enmasse to witness the arrival. Clarke rose from his seat and in company with his fellows, set out for the wharf to witness her unloading and to bandy words with her jolly skipper, Captain Bauer. In company with one or two of his cronies, he went aboard immediately the plank was down.

Making his way toward the bridge, he met the captain descending, in company with a bright,

young American, who listened, smilingly, to the cordial greetings and light bandiage exchanged between them. After greetings were exchanged, the captain bethought himself of Bruce, who had been treated by him, on the trip down, more as a guest than as a passenger.

"I have a young friend here, Clarke, who will be here in Ambon until the 'Heemskerk' goes North, and I want you to entertain him." With this the Captain introduced Bruce all around.

"He is very much interested in the pearling business, Clarke," the Captain continued, "and I told him several days ago, that you knew more about the pearl business than any other man in these waters."

"I guess I do," growled Clarke, "and for good reason, too. I lost half my fleet, last month, fighting the damn Chinks."

"Bruce pricked up his ears at this, and the Captain looked up with a start of surprise.

"You don't tell me," he exclaimed, "when did all this happen?"

"Oh, it's too long a story to tell you here," said Clarke, "when are you sailing?"

"With the morning tide," returned the Captain.

"Oh, well then, you can hear it at the club tonight. You'll have dinner there?"

Thanking him for the invitation and assuring him that he would be on hand to hear the story, the Captain, after turning Bruce over to Clarke with a further admonition as to Bruce's entertainment, excused himself on the plea of pressing duties. Bruce went ashore with Clarke. As Bruce stepped upon the busy wharf his nostrils distended with the aroma of the spicy atmosphere. Great rows of bags, piled high above his head, covered the major portion of the dock. These were filled with cloves and alspice and Bruce felt that he should like this place. Clarke took him directly to the hotel sending the porter immediately for Denton's baggage. He left him saying:

"When you get squared around, drop in at the

Club. I'll be there all afternoon and evening, but don't miss dinner, which is at seven-thirty."

"I'll be there right after tiffin," answered Bruce, "and thanks for your kindness."

"Not at all, son, not at all," said Clarke, as he left the hotel.

It was mid-afternoon when Bruce went to the Club, where he found Clarke playing a game of solo, with no other companions about than a bottle of vanishing Scotch, a glass, and a syphon of soda. As he stepped upon the veranda, Clarke greeted him with:

"Glad you've come. I was getting fearfully bored. I beat this game three straight times," and he called the boy to bring another glass.

To this Bruce raised his hand and said:

"Not for me, Clarke, thanks just the same, but I'm on the wagon," and, noting the look of mock compassion on Clarke's face, added:

"I'll take a cigar, if it's just the same."

Clarke grinned, and called, "Boy, Ada cheroot!"

"Sahya Tuan," echoed thinly from a room inside, and soon the boy brought the cigars, a half dozen of them, in a drinking tumbler. Each of them lighted one, and soon Bruce was eagerly listening to a graphic description of the pearling game by Clarke.

By the time the cigars were gone, and the syphon only flowed in gurgley, spasmodic gasps, Bruce had become wildly enthused and "horribly smitten" as he said with the pearl fishing game.

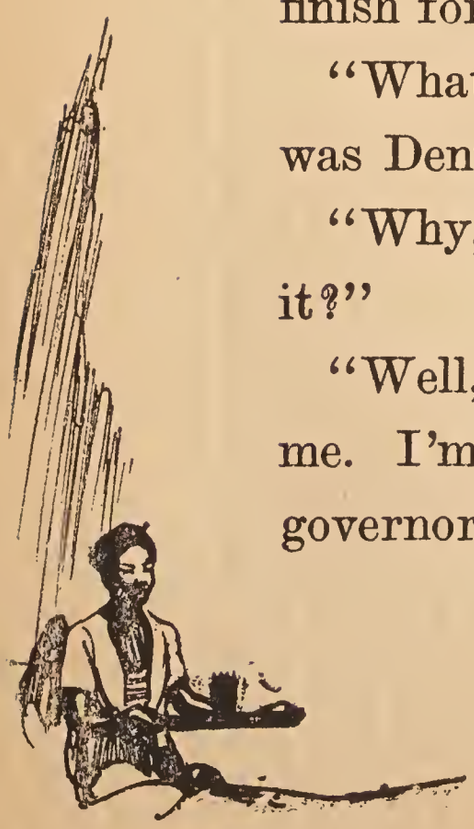
"It's a man's size game, isn't it, Clarke?"

"Yes, it is Bruce, I only wish I were twenty years younger and I would carry this fight to a finish for there is a big stake in it."

"What would it cost me to go into the game?" was Denton's next.

"Why," asked Clarke, "are you going into it?"

"Well," returned Bruce, "it is like this with me. I'm just a few months out of college. The governor gave me a piece of money and told me



to go out and see the world before I settled down in the office. I am just enough interested in the pearling game to want to take a whirl at it. If I thought I could break even on it, for a year or two, I would go into it, for the fun of it, and particularly, as there seems to be an argument on hand as to whether anybody has the right to go into any business he sees fit. I just love a good scrap." He looked at Clark with eyes that sparkled.

Clarke, in turn, looked at the younger man with kindly regard. He was a boy after his own heart.

"How much money have you got?" he asked.

"I've got about eleven thousand with me. I left home with fifteen." Clark grinned.

"Well, that might buy you a couple of diving suits, and a couple of spare sails," he remarked. "But that's about all. Have you any idea what it costs to go into the pearling game?"

"No," answered Bruce.

"Well," drawled Clarke, "You can get a

pretty fair outfit for a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars.''

Denton's face fell and Clarke burst out laughing.

''Well I can wire the governor for money and he will send it, too.''

''No, you won't do that'' answered Clarke, ''I think I have a plan. I have half an outfit, really enough to start in, in a small way. Six thousand of your money will be enough to outfit on and operate until you get your first returns for the shell. Of course you might be lucky and find a few nice gems. If you are game enough to tackle it I'll stake you to what remains of my fleet, on a fifty-fifty basis. How does it strike you?''

''Wonderful'' answered Bruce. ''How soon can we get this thing framed up?''

''Why, tomorrow—if you're in a hurry,'' returned Clarke.

''My Dad says that his motto is 'Do it now.' What is good enough for him, is good enough for

me," said Bruce, as he extended his hand. "It's a bargain."

As a clincher Clarke finished the bottle of Scotch.

What remained of Clark's fleet lay at anchor in the harbor above the town. Together he and Bruce went out to inspect it. Of a fleet that had once numbered thirty luggers there now remained but seven and the schooner,—but these Clarke informed him could be fully manned upon short notice. Calling Ula the Ambonese captain of the schooner into consultation, arrangements to provision the fleet for immediate active service were made. This Ula said could be done within two days. With the assurance that Ula would attend to everything they went back to the Club, where Clarke spent the rest of the afternoon and evening in giving Bruce the details of the work. Ula, he assured him, was fully capable of handling the work, and the only necessary thing for Bruce to supply would be the executive authority, without which the native

crews were lost. It needed a stern hand at times and often, too, bare fists, to settle minor difficulties amongst the various boat crews and above all, a leader when beset with outside interference.

"Handle them rough but square" said Clark, "and you won't have any trouble with them."

The details of outfitting and of becoming familiar with the men filled the days that followed to overflowing for Bruce, for he gave his entire time to the project.

Clarke gave him every help and soon the fleet was ready to sail to the pearling beds. As they passed down the street on the evening of the sailing, Bruce bethought himself of a last moment purchase and telling Clarke to wait a moment stepped into a toko to buy a tin of Dutch cigars. It was the toko of Ah Foon, who sat idly fanning himself just within the doorway. Turning to him Bruce asked for the cigars and Ah Foon called to someone in the backroom of the toke to come and wait on Bruce.

As the Chinese entered the room Bruce glanced through the curtained doorway and stood rooted to the spot with what he saw. Quai Fa was sitting, her profile to him, upon a low chair playing with a kitten. The kitten scampered away from her and entered the toko with Quai Fa in close pursuit. The kitten ran directly to Bruce and Quai Fa stopped a few feet from him to look at the stranger. She raised her face and their eyes met. Quai Fa uttered a little cry of estatic surprise which she immediately choked back and gazed fearfully at her father. Ah Foon had not been paying attention to either of them and so had missed entirely the little scene. At her cry, however, he turned quickly and though he did not sense the true import of it, he realized the meaning of the look on Denton's face. Instantly he ordered Quai Fa to retire. Quai Fa turned and walked slowly to the room behind the toko while Bruce completed his purchase and left the place.

Clarke noted his change of demeanor as Bruce

caught up with him, for he had walked ahead a little and now looked at him quizzically.

What's happened?" he asked, "You look as though you had seen a ghost."

Bruce hesitated a moment, undecided as to whether he should tell Clarke what was in his heart, and then asked:

"What is the daughter of the Flying Fox doing in Ambon?"

"Daughter of the Flying Fox!" echoed Clarke, "What do you know about the daughter of the Flying Fox? It was the Flying Fox that wiped me out."

"The devil you say?" answered Bruce, and fell silent, overcome with conflicting emotions, after a time saying:

"I know nothing of her, except that I have seen her several times in Canton."

"Humph!" said Clarke, "I always thought these local Chinks were hooked up with the Fox's organization. This will bear looking into.

Maybe it is just as well that I am not going along with you, I'll watch this end."

At the dock they shook hands and said "Goodbye," Clark giving Bruce, "God speed" and a warning to hit hard if interfered with. This Bruce promised to do, but lurking in his thoughts there loomed the fear that he might be forced into bloody battle with the father of the girl he loved. The thought was disquieting but he hoped that things would not come to such a pass. The dinghy bore him to the schooner which, as he clambered aboard, hoisted her sails and, followed by the seven luggers, slowly gathered way to glide silently down the harbor. Clarke stood and watched him from the dock until they disappeared in the gathering dusk of the evening.

"I hope I haven't got that boy into trouble," he murmured to himself as he turned to go back to the Club.

While Bruce had been outfitting, the agents of Ah Foon had not been idle. Every detail of the

wiping out of Clarke's great fleet of luggers had been given to him and he was fully informed regarding Bruce's venture. He resolved to go immediately to his brother's headquarters to see that the outrage was not repeated. Li Chang, his twin, held forth on the island of Lucipara which island had been the rendevous for the pearling fleets of his ancestors ever since their entry to the game.

On the island was a great cavern which was the abode of Li. Here he lived, secure from all interference in a sumptuously furnished grotto.

Li Chang was seldom interfered with in his conduct of the business and being cast of sterner stuff than Ah Foon had become a despot who ruled the island waters with an iron hand. Many attempts had been made to poach upon what he regarded as his preserves which he had stamped out ruthlessly in the beginning, using for the purpose, a gang of cut-throats gathered from the pirate stock of the southern Chinese waters.

Many were the attempts, too, that were made

upon his life for he punished severely the slightest infraction of his commands and of late he had become accustomed to talking to his lieutenants through a screen of peacock feathers that they might not see him and know him. That the men he employed were desperate characters no one realized better than he. Li feared them. He surrounded himself with a picked few that he knew that he could trust. All others never saw him, but talked to him as they received their orders, through the peacock screen. His name, which by virtue of the brand or chop of the house, was the Flying Fox: None in the islands knew that he was only the employee of his brother.

With the return of the Clarke fleet to the pearling beds, news was brought to him that outsiders were at work again and he summoned before him one of his fighting men. To him he gave orders that the new comers be warned away and should they ignore the warning, to wipe them out as had been the others. The man bowed

himself from the presence of his invisible master, leaving immediately to carry out the orders.

The day that followed brought a surprise for Li Chang. From the little landing place came a coolie who had been working there. He brought the news of the coming of a strange white boat that even now was landing passengers. The boat was the "Sui On" and the people that were coming up the pathway to the cavern entrance were Ah Foon and his daughter Quai Fa.

Li Chang awaited their coming behind the screen. As his brother entered the room he was nearly stunned with surprise and hastily came from behind the screen to greet him, glad to see him but at the same time, pondering on what could have occasioned this unheralded visit. Ah Foon had not visited the island in years, but each time he had come on a flying visit, he had sent word of his coming. Ah Foon was glad, too, to see Li Chang but underlying his brotherly affection was a deep seated resentment for his

murderous brutality and flagrant mismanagement of the fisheries.

Li sensed that something was wrong and quaked with dread, but he let no sign of this enter his bland countenance. Ah Foon was content to bide his time and said nothing of what was in his mind.

In the days that followed, during which time Ah Foon learned much of the organization that Li had built up, he let fall a few pointed comments which filled Li with unrest. From the attitude of his brother he feared that he might be sent back to Canton and another take his place. His crafty brain fell to scheming a way out of the difficulty and there came to him many dark thoughts.

Many times he had wished that he alone owned the business in his own right. Many times he had told himself that it was wholly due to his efforts that Ah Foon lived in luxurious ease in the gay city while he did the work on the lonely island. Though he liked Quai Fa, he noted with

growing jealousy the unbounded affection Ah Foon bestowed upon her and he learned from Ah Foon that he intended leaving a large part of his estate to her. This filled him with bitter anger and his greedy soul became busy in plotting to gain her portion for himself.

Li brooded upon these thoughts though he was urbanely subservious to his brother's wishes, the while the subtle brain was busy in plotting against his brother, to gain sanction for Quai Fa's hand in marriage. He became unwontedly kind in his attentions toward her, but Quai Fa mistrusted him and merely tolerated him. Planted deeply in her heart was her love of Bruce.

One day Li broached the matter to his brother who after gazing sternly at him for a moment said:

"It is not fitting that a vulture mate with a Flower." He said it with a finality that closed the matter for all time.

Meanwhile, Bruce was hard at work among

the pearling beds. A rich area had been found and the bins on the luggers and the schooner were fast becoming filled with an excellent quality of shell. He had been unusually lucky also for a number of fine stones had been found, which but whetted his enthusiasm. He was like a boy with a new toy. When night settled down, after each day's work, he would eat a hasty meal and then dog tired from the days labors in which he took an active part, would go to bed and fall into a dreamless log-like slumber.

One morning as the little fleet was preparing to leave a sheltered inlet and go to the scene of the day's work there came a motor launch to visit him. Chugging its way with jaunty effrontery it bumped carelessly against the schooners low side. There stepped over the rail from it a Chinese. It was the man that Li Chang had sent to Bruce to give the warning. He handed Bruce a little packet. Bruce opened the packet with hands that trembled with excitement for he sensed that this presaged a fight.

"I've got a hunch," he murmured to himself "that this means trouble," this, as the contents of the packet came to view. It was a folded square of oiled silk. On it were the words written in decrepit Malay, "The fishing rights belong to me. You must cease operation at once. Remember Clarke." Stamped beneath the writing and taking the place of both signature and seal was the "chop" of the Flying Fox—Bruce could not read Malay, and he turned to Ula, questioning him as to what it was all about. As Ula saw the emblem of Ah Foon upon the note his eyes widened in terror, while the emissary of the Fox smiled sardonically at his fear.

"Well," snapped Bruce "out with it—are we to be shot at sunrise or what?"

The crew of the schooner sensed that something was not right and gathered close, but Bruce angrily ordered them away while Ula, almost slavering in terror, explained to Bruce the contents of the note. Bruce went white with anger and tensed to leap upon the messenger. Ula

divined what was in his mind and sprang to intercept him. Bruce glowered for a moment at the Chinese who drew himself up proudly, as though disdainful of anything that Bruce might do. The messenger spoke sharply, asking what word he should take his master. Bruce thought a moment, then with a smile reached into the scuppers and picking up a husked out oyster, twice as large as a man's hand he slapped it full into the face of the messenger.

"Take him that for an answer,—and the sooner the quicker," he remarked.

Taken aback for the instant the Chinese staggered against the rail then, a look of scorn supplanting the black rage that distorted his face, he turned and stepped over the rail into the waiting launch which soon disappeared around a point of the bay.

But little shell was harvested that day for the men knew the full import of the visit. Denton's efforts to allay their fears were met with fearful shakes of their heads and when his back was

turned they talked in low tones among themselves. It was a weary Bruce that crawled into his bunk that night when the day's fishing was over.

Morning came with the sky in the offing a leaden gray and a stiff breeze moaned through the rigging like a harbinger of doom. Whitecaps outside the reef that sheltered them spoke of a restless sea which would make work that day unpleasant. Bruce however, feeling that the best way to quiet the unrest that he knew the men were under, ordered the luggers out to work. Ula obediently hoisted the sailing signal. It fluttered a moment then the breeze died away. This done Bruce went below to get his breakfast.

While he was eating it he heard a babble of voices coming from above and the bumping of boats against the sides of the schooner. He listened for the moment, puzzled at what he heard, then he went on deck. There he found assembled the crews of all the luggers, who were gathered around Ula, engaged in a wild discussion. Bruce

They talked in low tnoes among themselves.

strode into the midst of the gathering and roughly threw those who were in his way aside, demanding to know why his sailing order had not been obeyed. Ula informed him that the men were quitting for they feared the Flying Fox.

Bruce looked around him taking note at the same time of an ash colored wall that was sweeping toward them from the open sea. He glanced aloft at the rigging. The stays and shrouds were hanging limp and motionless—there did not seem to be a breath of air stirring. It was the calm before the storm.

Pointing to the approaching wall which was coming with express train speed and which he knew would bring with it wind that would sweep his fleet upon the sharp toothed reef within the twinkling of an eye should the luggers remain unmanned, he roared to the men to return to the luggers and save them. This they refused to do, shaking their heads with sullen apathy.

Overcome with fear of losing the fleet he changed his tactics and pled with the men—but

it was of no avail. They had received a warning of death from the Flying Fox: They were quitting in a body and wanted their wages. Then Bruce saw red.

Ula and the crew of the schooner he knew he could count upon. Shouting to Ula to arm the crew and to beat the men into submission he leaped at the nearest, the spokesman of number two lugger, knocking him flat with a terrific swing upon the chin. Then Bruce went berserk. Clenching his teeth, his face set in cold determination, he waded into the gang of mutineers with bare fists that smote like battering rams. The men tried at first to run away, to dodge this fighting devil of a white man, but no matter where they ran upon the deck, he sought them out, knocking them about like nine-pins.

Back of the after-cabin where the crew of the schooner and Ula had gone to get winch bars with which to fight, there was a pretty battle in progress. The men understood this kind of fighting, and those whom Bruce had driven from

the forward deck hurled themselves en masse upon Ula and his men. Bruce heard the wild cries and the sound of fighting on the after deck and turned to go there. Here he found a real battle in progress and though many of the men lay quiet on the deck, mute evidence of the efficacy of the winch bars, the others with drawn knives were battling savagely with the schooner's crew, two of whom were down.

Bruce realized the fight had gone beyond the bare fist stage and drew from his hip pocket his automatic, which since the coming of the warning the day before he had taken from his cabin and carried with him. He levelled the pistol at the crowd and shouted a warning which none but Ula heeded. Ula turned to look and shrieked to Bruce to look behind him pointing as he gave the warning. Bruce turned just in time to see the spokesman of Number Two lugger, the first man he had struck, springing at him with wavy bladed kriss.

There was no time to dodge and as the blade

sunk into his shoulder the automatic spoke. The man sunk to his knees and collapsed upon the deck leaving the kriss standing upright in Denton's shoulder. Bruce staggered against the rail, sick, not with the pain of the wound, but with the horror the white man has of a knife, then recovering himself savagely jerked it from his shoulder and emptied the automatic into the milling mass on the after-deck. With each shot a man fell. As the fusillade of shots rang out the storm struck and the schooner heeled before the blast almost submerging her low rail. The men, dead and alive, rolled in one thrusting, cursing, murderous mass across the deck to the lee scuppers.

This stopped the fight. As the schooner slowly righted came the rain. It came like a cloud burst, washing clean the dark stains from the decks. Those of the luggers crews that were able to do so leaped overside and struck out for the shore a hundred yards distant. When the storm struck Bruce lost his footing and with the

others slid across the slippery deck striking his head upon a deck cleat. He saw a great burst of green light and then everything went black.

In the moments that followed while Bruce lay unconscious against the rail, Ula and those that remained of the crew sprang to the anchor gear to pay out more chain. The schooner was dragging her anchor. While they were engaged at this Bruce regained his senses and sat up. The deluge of rain had brought him from his faint. His first thoughts were for the safety of the luggers.

He arose unsteadily to his feet and gazed around him. In the downpour everything was obscured. He was sick at his stomach and his head and shoulder ached abominably. He staggered to a coil of rope nearby and sat down upon it to rest, trying to collect his thoughts.

As the storm cleared away the horizon became brighter and Bruce groaned with dismay. Where the luggers had been riding at anchor there was now only an angry waste of white-

capped water. Over to the left where lay the reef he saw the top rigging of the largest of the luggers careening drunkenly a few feet above the white caps. The whole fleet of luggers had been swept upon the reef, to sink after being dashed upon it, with stove-in bottoms. Bruce was gripped with black despair.

"What in God's name will I tell Clarke?" he murmured.

Not knowing what else to do, Ula came to him cringing, fearful that he might be blamed with the disaster. He opened his lips to speak but Bruce with a wave of his hand told him to keep silent. As he turned the thing over in his mind Bruce's anger rose again. Rising to his feet he surveyed the deck. Lying near him was the first man that he had shot—Bruce looked at him vengefully.

The man whose face was turned toward that of Bruce was a half caste. He was half Chinese and half Malay. Unlike the others he wore a broad leather belt upon which were fastened

capacious pockets. Bruce walked over toward him and stood looking down upon him. Ula with the crew followed at a respectful distance. After a moments survey of the man Bruce shrugged and turned to Ula saying:

"Get rid of all this carrion."

Telling the men to clear the decks of those who had been killed, Ula stooped to pick up the body. As he did so his eyes fell upon the belt which he instantly coveted. His eyes, which he raised to those of Bruce, held a silent question. Bruce looked at him and a quizzical smile crept over his face. He nodded, "Yes."

Ula unbuckled the belt and after tossing the body overboard, brought the belt to Bruce and searched its pockets. Among the things he found there was a small packet of pearls which Ula handed to Bruce. There was also a small wad of tightly rolled silk. This he unrolled excitedly. It carried a message. Translated it read:

"After wrecking the luggers come to Luci-

para. There you will meet a man who has a broken china plate, if the fragment of porcelain you have fits the break you will know him to be your guide. He will lead you to me, I will reward you." The "surat" was signed with the "chop" of the Flying Fox. Bruce looked at the message a victim of harrowing perplexity.

"So I had a spy right in my own organization. I stood a fine chance!"

"What's this piece of porcelain?" he said to Ula.

Ula shrugged his shoulders and then went through the belt again. Down in the bottom of the pocket, hidden by the stiffness of the leather, he found a little chip of porcelain which he handed to Bruce. Bruce looked at the tiny fragment that lay in the palm of his hand for a moment; then turning to Ula said:

"Ula this is the little open sesame to the hang-out of the bird that has caused me all this woe. I am going to address him with a few staccatto remarks read from Mr. Colt's latest work on

how to ventilate the human form. If you don't get the entire drift of what I'm talking about, I'll put it so that you do. Head this barge toward Lucipara and don't even hesitate until you get there. I'll pay him a personal visit."

Ula looked at Bruce in dumfounded dismay.

"I mean it," said Bruce "we go to Lucipara now!"

Ula got the schooner under way without enthusiasm. While en route to Lucipara Bruce laid his plans. He would send one of the crew ashore with the fragment to meet the man with the plate and would follow close behind, dressed as a native and thus gain admittance to the lair of the Flying Fox. Once there he felt that he would exact vengeance and he felt that were he successful in wiping out the Fox, Clark would feel well remunerated for the loss of the luggers.

Within the caverns on the island the plans of Li Chang were maturing. Ah Foon had been taken ill. The emissary had returned with the news that Denton's game was at an end for the

crews of the luggers had been warned, and the most influential man aboard each lugger had been bribed to desert at the signs of the first storm.

Quai Fa had inadvertently overheard the report and had carried it to her father being at the same time consumed with dread. From the description of the scene which had taken place when the messenger had brought the warning to Bruce, she knew that the fleet was commanded by her lover. Then had Ah Foon risen in wrath at the further disobedience of his orders and promised Li that upon the return of the "Sui On" which had been sent to Ambon for supplies, Li would be sent back to China and forever sever his connections with the house of the Flying Fox. Li Chang was craftily penitent but in his soul he plotted murder. That very night he put into execution the beginning of his plans. Ah Foon would be seized with pains in his stomach and as the poisoning progressed would become increasingly ill and would die when Li Chang

wished it. In the meantime he would suffer for Li Chang loved to be cruel. Li was a master of slow poisoning.

The next day Ah Foon complained to Quai Fa that he was ill. He remained on his couch in a room which he had set aside for his personal use. It was one which connected to the great reception chamber by a short passage. When food was brought to him he did not eat and Li with guilty conscience wondered if his brother knew the truth. Ah Foon was still within the chamber with Quai Fa in loving attendance when a coolie burst into the reception chamber where Li was resting on inlaid divan. The coolie brought the news that the schooner of the wrecked fleet was in the little harbor. Instantly Li Chang divined the meaning of the visit.

"Let them come," he ordered.

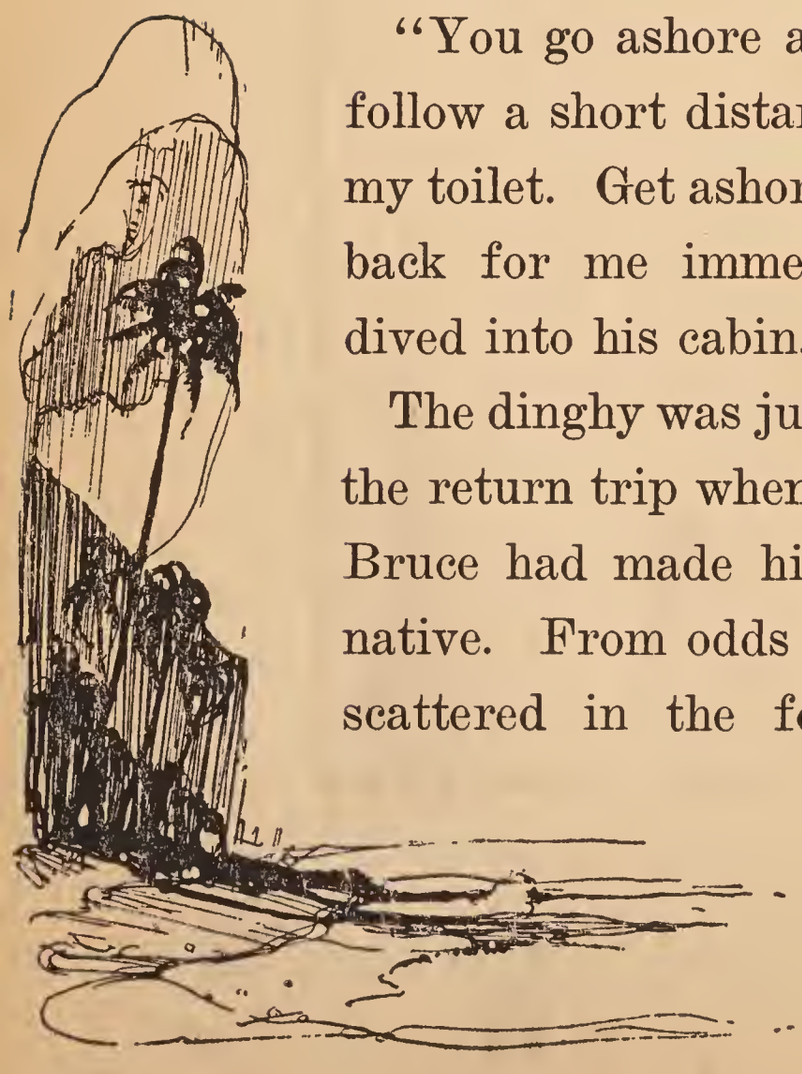
Clapping his hands together he turned to the man who answered the summons saying:

"Bring in the chair."

After the coolie had brought in a heavily

carved chair which Li placed, himself, in the center of the room, he turned and went behind the peacock screen, lighted a tiny wisp of tobacco placed in the brass bowl of a long stemmed pipe and awaited the coming of Bruce.

Bruce had the anchor dropped while still some distance from the shore. He called Ula to him. Though during the trip to the island he had discussed what he planned doing he had told Ula nothing definite. Now, taking the little chip of porcelain from his pocket he handed it to Ula saying:



"You go ashore and meet this guide. I will follow a short distance behind, after I've made my toilet. Get ashore quick and send the dinghy back for me immediately," so saying Bruce dived into his cabin.

The dinghy was just leaving the little wharf on the return trip when he came again to the deck, Bruce had made his toilet. He looked like a native. From odds and ends of native clothing scattered in the forecastle he had gathered

enough material to make the disguise complete; to the casual glance he was a native. Bruce walked to the rail and looked around. On the rocky shore there were only two figures to be seen, that of Ula and of a pajama clad Chinese who scrambled down toward Ula from a rocky shelf that overlooked the harbor.

Bruce watched them as they met and with the glasses saw Ula fit into its place the tiny bit of porcelain he had taken from the belt of the half-caste. Indicating the way with a gesture the guide preceded Ula up a narrow path which skirted the base of the mountain; soon they were lost to view in the dense growing cocoanuts.

As they entered the fringe of cocoanuts growing near the beach Bruce swung over the rail and dropped into the waiting dinghy. Rapidly he was rowed ashore where he ran toward the place he had seen the two enter the trees. After a short time he caught sight of them as they slowly made their way around the hill.

After following them for a short distance Ula

and his guide came into plain view, for they had penetrated beyond the grove of cocoanuts and were traversing a green meadow which lay at the foot of the mountains. The pathway lay directly at its foot. They were just in the middle of the open space when Bruce, startled by the snapping of a twig behind him, dropped to his knees with the automatic covering the spot from whence the sound had come. He listened for a few seconds, wondering what had caused the noise. His tensed nerves magnified every rustling leaf or wind-swept bamboo frond a thousand times.

"Huh! I'm all nerves," he murmured to himself and rose to watch the others. His eyes opened in wonder for they were gone. Scarcely ten seconds had elapsed since he had last seen them, and he knew that they could not have crossed from the middle of that clearing to the thicket beyond in less than a full minute. There was absolutely nothing growing in the clearing behind which to hide. It was as if they had van-

ished into thin air. Bruce felt his hair raise and the goose flesh crawl all over him. The impossible had happened and before the mystery of it he was gripped with a daunting fear.

"Great guns!" he murmured to himself, "this is uncanny, but they just could'nt disappear. Well, I started this little party and," gazing affectionately at the business like blue pistol he held in his hand, "I guess between the two of us we can keep up our end of it."

So saying he struck boldly out across the open place toward the spot where he had last seen Ula and his guide. As he looked around for some trace of the direction of their going his eye caught a dark patch on the hillside near the pathway. He went nearer to it to get a better view and smiled. It was the entrance to a passage which led inward toward the center of the mountain. Echoing thinly down the long corridor he heard the sound of footsteps coming through the blackness.

He groped his way along the passage, the pis-

tol in one hand the other upon the rough hewn wall for guidance, straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of those he followed. Soon the way became sharply descending and the walls became damp with moisture. There came a low rumble from above upon hearing which, he stopped to listen. Finally he made out what it was. It was the surf beating upon the rocky shore above him. He was beneath the sea. A short distance in front of him he heard a low hissing sound and he recoiled, the gun levelled, fearful of attack by something which he could not see. The blackness seemed to smite him with its intensity.

The very air was alive with thousands of bats which flew squeaking all about his head, their wings brushing him in their flight, their noisesome bodies making foul the air with their reeking stench. The thing began to get on Bruce's nerves. He began to wonder if this interminable corridor led to the center of the earth and he cursed his foolhardiness in coming to such a place alone. When he was just about ready to

retrace his steps the hissing came again. It was louder this time.

As he gazed into the unfathomable blackness ahead he saw a vertical narrow band of yellow light appear. It broadened slowly and he saw a door open through which Ula and his guide passed. The guide closed the door behind him as he entered. In the brief interval the mellow light from within had lighted the pathway and Bruce seeing that it was level at this point, leaped across the intervening distance and listened with ear close to the panel, trying to catch some sound from within. He heard nothing. He hesitated in momentary indecision, then slowly swinging open the door he peered through the narrow crack and saw before him a passage hewn from the solid rock and carpented with the richest rugs. The soft yellow glow that illuminated the place came from a bowl hewn from the rock wall. Trickling down from a blackened spot above it was a stream of thick crude oil that dripped onto a wad of something that was

burning. The heavy smoke that rose from the flame disappeared into a crevice above for there seemed to be a strong draft upward through it.

He opened the door a bit and looked straight down the passage. It was empty and its other end was closed with golden curtains. On the curtain worked in black embroidery was the emblem of the Flying Fox, a bat with outspread wings. Bruce thrilled at the sight for he knew that he had found the lair of the Fox.

There was a faint odor of incense in the air. It was as if something ineffably sweet had passed through the place and had left behind an intangible reminder of the passing. He heard a deep toned gong strike three times behind the curtain. There were voices, too, that seemed muffled, so he guessed that there were rooms beyond and cautiously crept up close to the curtain. He was just bending over to look through a little parting in the heavy drapes when a voice from within called:

"Come in, Denton!" Bruce was thunderstruck.

He thrust the curtains aside and stepped through the doorway. The room was empty. He gazed around at its rich interior and marvelled at what he saw. The walls were hung with yellow silk and one immense green and gold rug covered the floor.

Elaborately carved Chinese furniture, dragon chairs of blackest ebony, delicate taborets that supported priceless porcelains, ivory figures that stood in vivid contrast with the aged rosewood cabinets that held them, all showing a taste for the beautiful, a love for the artistic that made him wonder what manner of man the Flying Fox could be. He saw a screen of peacock feathers at the far end of the room, and the voice came again.

"I have been waiting for you, Denton; I wanted to have a talk with you," the voice said.

"Well," answered Bruce, "I have come here

for the same purpose. So we can have that little talk right now."

Bruce was answered by a chuckle from behind the screen and was at the same instant seized from behind by two six foot Chinese who as they pinioned him wrested from his grip his only weapon—the automatic pistol. His struggles were in vain, for they held him in a grip of iron. A gong boomed once. The room was plunged in utter blackness—there was a rustling as of silk curtains thrust aside and suddenly it was light again. The voice came from behind the screen.

"Go over to that nearest chair, Denton, and sit down." Bruce hesitated and the voice continued: "Sit down, Denton, sit down! You will get tired standing, we are going to have a long talk."

Bruce shrugged his shoulders and sat down. As he dropped his arm on the carved arm of the chair he heard a little click. It was the same chair that the coolie had brought in for Li Chang

to place, as Bruce looked at the arm there sprung from their places of concealment in the carving of the arm rest, two sharp pointed hooks which enclosed his forearm but did not quite touch it. On the needle pointed barbs he saw a green sticky substance which he realized must be poison. He shrank from the thing in horror and as he shifted his weight in the chair the points lifted a little and hung quivering as though poised to strike. Bruce's heart stood still. He heard a chuckle come from behind the screen and the purring of the voice of Li Chang.

"Keep your weight well on that arm for if you move the slightest bit in any direction the points will sink home. Then it will be only a matter of minutes—a very few minutes."

Bruce cursed his luck and foolhardiness in coming to the place and the man behind the screen must have divined his thoughts for he chuckled immoderately and twitted him with his predicament. Bruce squirmed in anger and Li Chang hissed the word:

"Careful!"

Li was playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse and he gloated over his prisoner. Bruce gazed in terror at the hooks. They were just returning to their striking position. There was a little green speck on each side of his sleeve where the points had touched it and he grew sick with the thought of his brush with that green death.

Bruce fell silent for the time then with mounting anger which was directed mainly at himself, he cursed the Flying Fox, daring him to come from behind the screen and show himself. His hoarse voice, choked with anger, penetrated to the room where Quai Fa nursed her ailing father. Quai Fa looked up in stunned surprise. She instantly recognized the voice. With a glance at Ah Foon who lay comfortably resting upon the couch, she stole down the corridor and peered through a peep-hole which was pierced through the eye of an embroidered dragon which was part of the decoration of the great drape

Li was playing with Bruce as
a cat plays with a mouse.

at him, helpless through the little opening in the head of the dragon behind him.

His thoughts were confused. He was at a loss to know what to do. His eyes travelled slowly around the room seeking some means of escape, but on each side there was only the endless yellow silken hanging that for all he knew might conceal guards that would frustrate any attempt he made to free himself. He looked at the barbed points that quivered as though eager to strike at the slightest movement of his body and fell to studying the carved head of the dragon which formed the end of the chair arm.

Something peculiar about that head fascinated him. He had seen many such chairs like it in China, but none of these were as finely wrought, it seemed. It had a flaming red tongue that swayed from side to side and had eyes of pearl that protruded slightly from the head.

He leaned over slightly to look at the eyes, watching the poisoned points as he did so. They did not move for he was careful not to shift his

weight. He studied the head closely for something told him that there must be some way out of the grip of the thing that made escape possible to any one that knew the secret of the chair. The whole attitude of the head on the chair arm was different and as he studied the thing he noticed that one of the eyes seemed to be loose in it's setting. Slowly raising his free hand, watching the points as he did so for any signs of movement, he touched the pearl disc that formed the eye of the dragon.

It was loose. It was only an idle impulse that prompted him to push it back into place, but he did it and instantly heard a low whirring from within the body of the chair. He froze with dismay at the sound for he feared that he had set in motion the diabolical mechanism of the chair to his undoing. Wide-eyed he gazed at the two barbs of death. With infinite relief he saw them bend slowly outward and down, to fold themselves and disappear in the body of the arm, masked by the ornate carving.

In the outer chamber where Li had caused Ula to be held prisoner there were gathered the bad men of the coast of China. They were standing in the corner of the room intently listening to the questioning of the prisoner by their master.

Ula cringed in piteous distress for Li was making promises. They were promises of the punishment to come. He was to receive twenty lashes with the tail of the "Ikan Pari" the great sting ray of the coral reefs. Should he survive this punishment, and Ula knew that this was the sentence of his death, then would he be tied flat upon his back and the "hahleepan" the monstrous centipede of the islands, be placed upon his naked breast to draw a fiery trail of torturing madness upon his quivering body.

As the sentence was pronounced he shrieked in terror and begged to be killed outright, but Li Chang bent upon his murderous plan, gloated with cruel delight at the agony of his victim and gave orders that the thing be done without delay.

While the servants were making Ula ready for the torture he left the room to go to Bruce to taunt him further. Fearful of what might lay in wait for him behind the curtains Bruce sat in the chair for a moment after the points had folded themselves away waiting to see what would happen.

Faintly coming to him from the distant torture chamber he heard the muffled cries of Ula. He sprung to his feet to go to him but realized that he was unarmed. Quickly looking around the room for something which might serve as a weapon he saw a tall thin bronze vase upon a spindly table. It would make an admirable club. The turned out lip made a perfect grip which would enable him to hold it securely in his hand. He seized it and he did so caught from the tail of his eye the movement of the hangings where Li Chang had passed before.

As he gazed at it the movement seemed to be coming toward him for he stood just before the screen, but a little to one side. He knew that Li

was returning. He would come again to the peacock screen.

Bruce stepped lightly to the edge of the screen and as the wave in the curtain came abreast of him, seized the silken hanging, thrust it aside and raising the bronze vase high above his head, brought it down heavily on the head of Li who unconscious of his peril, was taken unawares. The vase struck him a glancing blow upon the head and heavily upon the shoulder nearest Bruce. Li collapsed like a log.

Bruce stood for an instant gazing upon his fallen enemy then realizing his danger turned to flee. In his confused state of mind he could not remember just where the corridor was that had brought him to the place. Behind him he saw a place in the drape that hung from the roof that looked as though it was parted. He sprung toward it and sure enough, the drapes overlapped at that point and he stepped through the opening. He was in a short corridor. At it's further end he saw the figure of a girl who with

her back toward him was just entering the room at the end of the passage.

As she stepped into the room she turned. Bruce recognized her instantly and exclaimed.

"Quai Fa! What are you doing here." He ran to her.

Ah Foon at the sound raised himself from the couch. As Bruce saw him he dropped the vase in surprise; he was petrified with amazement for had he not just an instant before knocked this man unconscious on the other side of the reception chamber? Ah Foon and his twin brother were as alike in appearance as two peas, but Bruce never thought of there being two of them. He leaped at Ah Foon saying:

"I thought I finished you a moment ago, but I see I didn't. I'll do the job right this time," and his fingers closed on Ah Foon's throat.

Quai Fa gazed for the moment speechless, then recovering her senses shrieked:

"Bruce! he is my father," and she threw herself upon him sobbing with terror. "It was Li

Chang you struck, there in the other room."

Bruce released Ah Foon and turned to Quai Fa.

"Li Chang" he said, "who is he?"

"Father's wicked brother," answered Quai Fa, "it was he who caused the destruction of your pearling fleet. Father has come to punish him for it. That is why we left Canton."

Bruce looked at her speechless for the moment, then as her tear-filled eyes looked appealingly into his, went to her and gathered her into his arms.

Then it was Ah Foon who broke the silence. Turning to Quai Fa who nestled in Bruce's arms he demanded to know how she, his daughter, should know this stranger. Bruce answered for her, telling how he had seen her in the place before the temple, and of the fight that followed, leaving out however, the details of the melee. Quai Fa listened quietly up to his telling of the fight, then broke in and told Ah Foon of the

great band of beggars and how Bruce had fought for her.

She drew away from Bruce and went to Ah Foon and there, her head resting on his shoulder, sobbed out the story of her disobedience and of how she had talked to Bruce over the high wall of the garden. She told Ah Foon of her love for Bruce and reaching into the neck of her silk coat drew out the locket, opened it and showed it to her father.

Ah Foon stood in listening silence. In his heart there came a great pain. Quai Fa who had loved him alone: Quai Fa his little daughter now loved another. There came to him the memory of that evening, not so long ago in the garden, when she had played the harp so beautifully. He remembered the thoughts that had come to him as he stood listening. He bowed his head to the inevitable, the while looking into Bruce's soul with groping eyes. Bruce in turn looked deeply into those of the older man.

In them he saw only kindliness and the great

love that Ah Foon bore Quai Fa. Somehow he sensed that he was undergoing examination and there came to him a vague fear that this wise old man might find him wanting. Quai Fa with a woman's instinctive subtlety knew what passed through Ah Foon's thoughts and her hand crept slowly to his arm where it lightly caressed it, in appeal.

In Bruce Denton's face there was nothing that disturbed Ah Foon. In it were rugged manliness and the signs of clean living. It was a face, different than the ones of the average white man that lived in China. There were no earmarks of late hours, no signs of drink and the blue eyes looked squarely into his unafraid and honest. "This is a man," Ah Foon told himself.

Bruce read the unspoken approval in Ah Foon's eyes and drawing Quai Fa closer to him said, his voice trembling in it's intensity:

"I will be good to her."

Ah Foon's eyes wandered from the blue ones. His gaze flitted from object to object about the

room for a moment, then, as though centered upon something infinite in distance looked down the long vista of tomorrow, wondering, pondering.

* * *

To his mind came the memory of John Dowling, her father. He, Ah Foon remembered, was an American. Bruce was of the same country. Ah Foon remembered that with the little baby Jane there had been intrusted to his care, a Bible. He had never told Quai Fa of her parentage. Now was the time to do it. Taking their hands in his he told them the story of Jane's adoption and his great love of the motherless girl. He told Quai Fa her English name and how he had planned some time to see her happily married to a man of her own race, found worthy of her. In Bruce, Quai Fa had found that man and Ah Foon was content.

In the torture chamber the men had prepared Ula for the torture. With hands tied to an iron ring that hung from a great staple in the wall

above his head, Ula prayed that he might die speedily. The six foot Manchu that had wrested the pistol from Bruce stood with the death-dealing whip in readiness for the lashing that was to loose the soul of Ula. They awaited the return of Li.

The glancing blow that Bruce had given him had stunned Li and he lay unconscious for minutes, then recovering slightly he became conscious of a throbbing, blinding ache in his head. He staggered to his feet and made his way slowly back to the torture room to call his men and bind up the bleeding gash the vase had made.

As he entered the room the men rushed to him to aid him for he was scarcely able to stand. They assisted him to a bench where they bathed the cut and bound it up. As they finished it Li's eyes caught sight of the nude figure of Ula bound to the whipping ring. His pain-drawn face became black with murderous anger and he remembered Bruce and the terrific blow that he had given him.

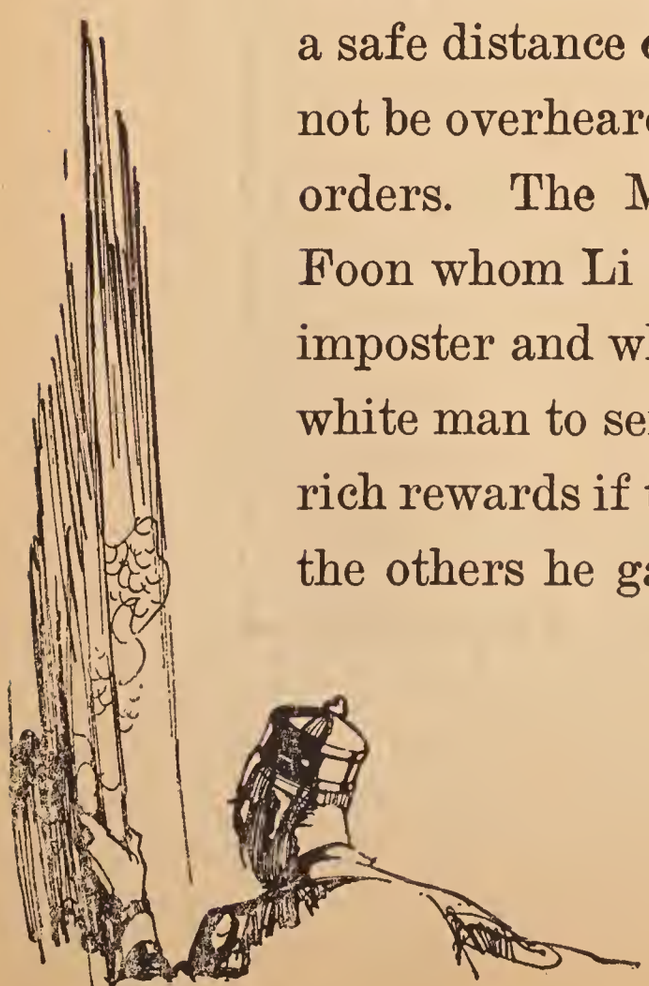
The thought flashed through his mind that Bruce had torn himself out of the chair regardless of the poisoned points and had had sufficient time before the poison became effective to seek revenge. The thought came to him that possibly Bruce was still alive for the poison sometimes worked slowly. With the thought that Bruce might still be susceptible to pain, came the desire to torture him before his life finally flickered away and he rose to his feet, calling to the men to follow him. It never occurred to him that Bruce might be free, unscathed. The chair had never failed in times past.

Leading the way he entered the corridor and went to the reception chamber. He flung back the heavy drapes and gazed in surprise at the empty room. He heard the murmur of Ah Foon's voice. The hangings where Bruce had entered the passage were disturbed and Li went to them and peered through the parting. He recoiled in amazement. Bruce was standing holding in his arms the Flower of Kindness and Ah

Foon was talking to them with great kindliness. Though he did not know the circumstances of the meeting he sensed that it augured ill for him, and the plan he had laid for the death of his brother by poisoning, he dismissed from his mind as being too slow.

Now was the time to act. His men would do his bidding. He would order the death of both Bruce and Ah Foon now, and there would be the end of it. Quai Fa he would leave unharmed. He would bend her to his desires. She would forget.

Closing the parting of the silken curtain he withdrew from the room with the men. When at a safe distance down the corridor where he could not be overheard, he turned to them and gave his orders. The Manchu was to strike down Ah Foon whom Li told them he had found to be an imposter and who, he said, was plotting with the white man to seize the pearling beds. Li offered rich rewards if the thing were done speedily. To the others he gave the capture of Bruce, whom



he wished to take unhurt. Li promised them the pleasure of flaying Bruce alive.

The bestial faces of the devilish crew lighted with joy at this and when Li gave the order to proceed they crept silently to the entrance of Ah Foon's apartment. Li remained at the curtains as they rushed down the short passage.

With the sound of their coming Bruce realized the danger and sweeping Quai Fa and Ah Foon behind him, reached for the vase which lay where it had fallen on the floor. He swung it above his head just in time to defend himself from the nearest of the attackers. It was the Manchu. The heavy rim around the swelling body of the vase landed squarely upon the head of the snarling fiend and he sank to the ground where, after quivering a moment, his murderous soul took leave.

Li could not see what was happening within the room, but he knew that the fight was momentarily checked for when the Manchu fell the men had paused in their attack. He urged them

on and they, taking fresh heart at the sound of his voice leaped upon Bruce in one shrieking, howling mass. Bruce retreated a step and jumped upon the divan upon which Ah Foon had been resting. The bronze vase rose and fell. Each time it fell there was a crunch and a yellow soul went slithering down to hades.

Quai Fa crouched in the corner in wide-eyed fear, clutching in trembling hands the heavily embroidered robe of her father who gaped at Bruce in awe. Never had Ah Foon seen a man that fought like this one and there came to him the thought that Quai Fa would be well cared for by such a fighting man.

From behind the mob that were attacking Bruce there crept a sneaking figure. Dropping on his hands and knees, screening himself from Bruce's view by crawling close to the side of the couch on which Bruce stood, the coolie got behind him. Quai Fa was too terrified for speech for she saw the man and realized Bruce's danger. Her grip on Ah Foon's robe tightened and he

looked down at the girl to comfort her. Noting the expression on her face and following the direction of her eyes he too, saw Bruce's peril. Ah Foon wasted no time. Seizing a sword from it's hanging place upon the wall he unsheathed it by whirling it around his head so that the scabbard flew away and left the blade naked. The coolie's eyes were riveted on Bruce. He raised on his knees to grapple Bruce around the ankles. Ah Foon stepped from behind the screen which had hidden him from the coolie, raised the sword, point downwards, in both hands and drove it through the crouching body.

It was the first time Ah Foon had ever deliberately killed a man. The coolie died with a great struggle and Ah Foon let go the handle of the sword, gazing at the dying man with widening eyes. He had saved Bruce but at what expense! Ah Foon was not a man of blood.

Meanwhile Bruce was fighting like a demon.

Clawlike hands clutched at him in futile effort to seize him for the vase rose and fell with light-

ning speed and great precision. Half of the coolies were down now and Li, fearful that his prey escape him entered the room shouting commands, his face distorted with anger.

When Bruce saw him enter he blazed with anger. Up to that moment he was just fighting. There was something impersonal in the fight. He was not exactly angry. He was only fighting and he enjoyed it, but with the coming of Li, the fight took on a new aspect. Li, he had reason to hate. He forgot the coolies. Sweeping them aside with two flailing blows of his hard arms he leaped at Li.

When Li saw that rage-filled, killing face spring at him he went faint with abject fear and he turned to escape. With a scream of mortal anguish he flew down the corridor where he tripped in his haste upon the edge of a rug and fell sprawling to the floor. He rose instantly, but Bruce was upon him.

"Remember Clarke," Bruce hissed at the terrorized Chinaman as he swung.

The blow took Li squarely on the mouth and his long yellow teeth caught it's full impact. Li spat them out with a screech. He dodged and tried to gain the corridor through which Bruce had first entered the place. Bruce stopped him with his left. It landed with a vicious smack upon Li's bulging nose. The blow knocked Li from his feet and, struggling to keep his balance he staggered backward till his knees hit something behind him. He collapsed into a chair. Instantly he seized the arms of the chair to regain his footing. There was a click and all fell silent. He was trapped in the poison chair. The points were buried deeply in his arm.

One by one the coolies slunk out of the room for they knew that this was the end of things for Li. They had no desire to argue further with the demon of a white man who fought with both hands and smiled while he fought.

Bruce stopped and slowly dropped his hands. Li was gazing with eyes bulging from their sockets at the points buried in his arm. His bleeding,

toothless mouth was open for his jaw had dropped in panic stricken terror. Bruce looked at him in pitying fixity. His anger was gone. By this ironical twist of fate Li was to die by the very instrument he had used in times past, on his helpless victims.

When the place fell silent Ah Foon came slowly into the room. Quai Fa remained behind in the corridor. As Ah Foon came to the chair he saw what it was that held Li spellbound and his face drew with pain. Sickened by the sight he staggered from the room and sank down upon his couch where Quai Fa went to him to comfort him. She had read from Bruce's face that Li was in dire distress.

The poison was beginning now to course through his veins and Li, as he felt it's fiery tongue, twisted in agony. Great drops of sweat stood out upon his brow and he quivered like an aspen in a chill wind. His breath came in great gasps and he moaned a little. Suddenly the lethal virus reached his heart. Li became rigid

for a moment then slowly collapsed, his head falling to his breast.

Bruce turned from the sight to shut it from his eyes. It was not pleasant to see a man thus die, no matter how richly he deserved the fate.

As he entered the corridor to go to Quai Fa and her father, Bruce felt the ground tremble beneath him; there was a low rumble as of a great boiler blowing off its head of steam. He looked at Ah Foon questioningly and with the look the ground rose and fell beneath his feet like the gentle swell of the ocean. Bruce realized instantly what it was. It was an earthquake. The granite walls around him cracked and groaned with the crushing stress of the weight of the sea above them for the cavern lay far below the blue waters of the harbor. With the realization that they would be trapped like rats should the quake close the entrance to the cave he shouted to Ah Foon to escape, ran to Quai Fa whom he lifted in his arms and carried out into the reception chamber. As he entered the room he re-

membered Ula and wondered if he were still alive. The ground was rocking with increased violence, a great slab of rock fell from the roof, thundering on the floor as it broke into a thousand fragments. There was no time to lose.

"I've got to get her out of this" he breathed to himself.

"But if Ula is penned up down here I can't leave the poor devil to drown like a rat if the top comes in. Ula!" he shouted.

"Sahya Tuan," came the answer down the corridor on Bruce's left.

"Coming" yelled Bruce and giving Quai Fa into the care of her father for the moment, Bruce dashed down the corridor to the torture chamber. He found Ula still hanging from the ring in the wall. The rattan withes with which he was bound had cut cruelly into Ula's wrists and his hands were black from the arrested circulation.

Bruce tried to untie the knots but the ground was rocking so beneath his feet that he was

scarcely able to hold his footing and he saw that it would take too long to loosen the knots. Quickly he looked around the room to find something with which to cut the tough rattan. Lying in the corner near him he found an axe with which he severed the rattan with one blow. Together they left the room running for their lives to escape from the cavern. As he entered the great central room the rocky roof of which was seamed and cracked with the twisting of the earthquake a flood of water broke from above. The sea had penetrated the cavern. As the flood broke Bruce saw Ah Foon who carried Quai Fa in his arms, leave by the corridor by which he, had first entered the cavern. He leaped through the torrent of falling water followed by Ula. As he gained its entrance there came a great explosion followed by a loud rumbling roar from behind him. The whole roof had given way and the place was filled on the instant with the waters of the bay. The flood caught both him and Ula, hurled them from their feet and carried them

with a mad rush down the corridor upon its breast.

Ah Foon and Quai Fa were struggling up the steep ascent to the entrance of the place when the waters overtook them, but the first mad rush had subsided and Ah Foon was able to keep abreast of the rising waters. Before he gained the entrance Bruce and Ula joined him and Bruce took from Ah Foon's tired old arms, the trembling Quai Fa. As they stepped into the outer air a terrible sight came to their eyes. The heavens above were alight with a fiery glow and falling thickly about them was a rain of red hot sand. The mountain back of them, a long dormant volcano had burst forth in wrath and was laying waste the island.

From the slight eminence upon which they stood on the side of the mountain, their view of the bay was unobstructed and as Bruce looked, he saw a sight which filled him with heart chilling consternation. His schooner which he had left, he thought, securely anchored a little way

off-shore was going round and round in a mad whirl. It was drawing nearer to the center of a great black swirl of water which disappeared in a great liquid funnel in the center of the bay. As he gazed the schooner reached the center of the whirl, her stern lifted in mid-air, hung drunkenly poised for an instant and then darted into the opening and disappeared. The seething vortex continued for a moment and then slowly subsided. The schooner had closed the gaping hole in the roof of the cavern.

Meanwhile the sky was becoming overcast with a thick black cloud of ash and great stones fell here and there about them. The air was choked with the fumes of burning sulphur and their lungs were seared with the volcano's acrid breath. A burst of yellow gases engulfed them from behind and they were driven from the mouth of the cavern, for breathing there was impossible.

Behind them in the cavern was a hissing, roaring hell of fire and water, outside a hail of red

hot sand and rock. They were between the hammer and the anvil and Bruce almost gave up hope. He looked at Ah Foon with an all-is-lost expression on his face, then he looked at Quai Fa. The sight of her strengthened him and he stiffened with determination.

"I am not licked until I'm dead," he gritted through his teeth.

Wrapping her head in his turban to protect her from the burning sand and telling the others to follow he lifted her upon his shoulder and ran madly down the side of the mountain to the shelter of the thick growing cocoanuts. Shock followed shock as the waters of the bay found their way to the burning center of the mountain causing great explosions. With the coming of each of these the ground swayed drunkenly beneath their feet and Bruce fell to his knees unable to keep his footing with the burden that he carried.

They passed through the shelter of the cocoanuts and gained the beach where Bruce let Quai Fa down, for his strength was nearly gone. High

upon the beach, tossed there by the tidal wave that had swept the shores of the island with the first shock of the earthquake was a small native felluca, an outrigger canoe, that carried a lateen sail. The shocks were coming in quicker succession now and a great column of flame arose from the crater of the volcano back of them. Bruce realized that they must leave the island for it would soon be buried in the rain of molten sand. Their clothing was scorched by it and where ever it struck the bare skin and remained for an instant it left an ugly burn.

Ula who was almost nude was moaning with the pain of it. Quickly Bruce decided they would chance all in the little native craft: They would put to sea. Placing Quai Fa in the center of the boat, Bruce with the aid of the others pushed it down the sloping beach and into the rolling surf where he and Ah Foon clambered in and hoisted the sail. Ula, waist deep in the water pushed it further out from the shore. The wind caught the triangular sail and soon the island

dropped behind, obscured in a dense grey wall of smoke.

As night closed down they found themselves far from sight of land, but Ula needed neither compass nor charts to navigate the island waters. He laid a direct course for Ambon, secure in the knowledge that if the wind held steady, sooner or later they would be safe within its harbor. Quai Fa fell asleep, her head pillowed on Bruce's shoulder, shielded from the wind-driven spray by the embroidered coat of Ah Foon who sat in the narrow stern wondering what the outcome of the thing would be.

At midnight Bruce, who had snatched a little sleep rose carefully, lest he awaken Quai Fa, and took Ula's place at the helm. As morning dawned the breeze dropped and the sun lifted like a glowing ball of copper from a sea that rose and fell lazily as though covered with a film of oil. They entered a flat calm.

When Quai Fa awakened she asked for water and Bruce, a great lump in his throat choked

They entered a flat calm—

out:

"Little girl there isn't any," and he turned his face away, as he pictured what must happen if the calm endured.

Ambon was four days sail away. They would pass several rocky islands before reaching there, but on them was no water. Ula had told him the night before. Quai Fa smiled when he told her of the lack of water for she did not realize what it meant.

As the sun rose higher in the heavens, beating from a cloudless sky upon their unsheltered heads, its heat became terriffic and the mouths of all became dry, parched with torturing thirst. Food they could do without, but water they must have. As the day wore on Bruce watched Quai Fa with growing dread. Her soft lips were cracking in the dry heat and were bleeding slightly. Ah Foon sat holding his coat above her to shield her from the direct rays, but the glare from the water was insufferable. Now and then a little moan escaped her and their hearts were

torn with sympathy, Bruce bursting at his impotence. The coming of cool night they welcomed doubly, for there came with it a gentle breeze. The loose hanging sail flapped indolently to and fro for a moment then slowly filled and the tiny craft slid gracefully through the water leaving in her wake, a million sparkling phosphorescent lights which pursued her in an efflorescent dance.

Quai Fa beheld them in glad wonderment. Bruce whose turn it was at the helm made her comfortable beside him, where she could watch the playful gleaming things that as night closed dark around them, flamed in the silent water. It took her mind from her suffering and she forgot her thirst, for the time absorbed in watching the myriad fishes who pursued the boat with sinuous gambols, each outlined in streamers of blue fire.

Ula who crouched in the waist of the boat was becoming delirious, for his burns had brought a fever, they having taken water from his system when he could ill afford its loss. Ah Foon,

with true Chinese stocism sat silent in the bow, uttering no sound, giving no sign of distress, while in his heart there was a growing admiration for Bruce Denton. He fell asleep, not to awaken until the dawning of a new day. When he awakened he sat up suddenly and looked around. It was broad daylight. He had intended relieving Bruce at the tiller at midnight and now he realized that Bruce, who sat gazing ahead with leaden eyes and drooping shoulders, had not slept all night. With a self condemnatory exclamation he rose and went to Bruce, took the helm, telling Bruce to go forward and get some sleep.

As the day wore on Ah Foon's eyes succumbed to the glare and he, to rest them, kept them steadily upon the dark brown bottom of the boat merely glancing around now and then to sight the islands in the distance to maintain the course. Ula had explained the course in detail before he was overcome with the fever of his burns. It was Quai Fa who brought them all suddenly

erect with the glad cry, "There is a ship," and pointed to a long black smudge upon the horizon at the nearer end of which, they made out a small white steamer.

It was almost dead ahead and its course seemed to be diagonally across their own. Quickly Ah Foon swung the tiller so that they would intercept it. In the next half hour they watched the steamer grow in size, with Bruce in fevered anxiety, for he feared that it would pass them before they crossed its course.

There was something strangely familiar about the steamer to Quai Fa. She kept her eyes riveted upon it until she was sure of herself and then through swollen lips that could scarcely articulate the words.

"Bruce! Father! it is the Sui On!" Ah Foon opened wide his eyes at this and though the effort to see cost him great pain for they seemed filled with sand, he knew her to be right. Bruce leaped to his feet and pealing off his torn shirt waved it frantically above his head. The Sui

On was very near now and there seemed to be no one on the decks. For minutes it seemed that no one saw them and Bruce shouted himself hoarse in mad fear that they would not be seen. When they had almost given up hope there sounded three quick blasts of the steamers' whistle. It slowed down and veered toward them. Bruce collapsed to his seat in ecstasy of relief. Nothing mattered now for he knew that they were safe.

It was Ah Foon now, that took command. With a few sharp orders to his men who lined the rail in dumb surprise at seeing their master in such straits, he ordered them to carry Quai Fa and Ula to the deck of the Sui On. The gangway fell into the water with a splash and a dozen hands gripped the gunwale of the felucca while the captain stood ready on the grating to take Quai Fa aboard.

Quai Fa held back, insisting that Ula go first and Ah Foon impatiently assented then followed Bruce who quietly gathered Quai Fa in his arms

and went aboard leaving the felucca to its fate. Ah Foon turned to the captain and said the one word, "Ambon."

It was a sunburned trio that lounged in the shade of the after awning the following day.

Quai Fa, snuggled in his arms, was telling Bruce of the things that lovers plan to do, while Ah Foon gazed upon them with amused tolerance. His mind ran back to the time when he had told the same sweet things to Voice of Many Blossoms, his idolized wife. Ah Foon was content. He had found a man who was worthy of Quai Fa and of the fortune he would leave her.

As the thirst dried lips of Quai Fa assumed their wonted softness they bloomed sweetly like a rose that timorously unfolds its petals and the angry flush of her sunburned cheeks was lost in the return of satin.

They were gazing at the sunset, leaning arm in arm over the rail, whispering those things that were too dear to say aloud. Bruce watched her lips. As she spoke his name he smiled for

"Whispering those things that were too dear to say aloud."

she was not thinking of the end of day. Her little heart trembled with the thrill of that impulsive kiss. Turning to him slowly she pursed her lips and looked squarely into his eyes, her own dancing.

"Bruce," she said.

"You dear little witch," he exclaimed and gathered her in his arms where he showered her with kisses.

Ah Foon who had been strolling on the deck, turned the corner of the deck house just in time to catch the word "Bruce." He paused in his walk and then drew back in amazement.

"By the honor of my revered ancestors, the man makes loves like he fights," said Ah Foon as he beat a hasty retreat to the other side of the deckhouse with upraised hands.

On the morning of the second day they dropped the anchor under the walls of old Fort Nassau in the harbor at Ambon. The day was Sunday and the town seemed fast asleep. Here and there a few black gowned Dutch and half-

caste ladies escorted their infant charges to the Sabbath school.

After they had landed Ah Foon led the way to the toko where he insisted on Bruce stopping for he would not hear of his going to the hotel. There remained some things to be done in Ambon. Clarke must have a settlement and Bruce after changing clothes told Ah Foon that he was going to the Club to locate Clarke. To this Ah Foon answered:

"I shall go with you; it is I who shall settle with Clarke."

The idea pleased Bruce and he waited at the entrance of the toko for Ah Foon to get his sun hat. As Bruce stood in the shade at the entrance of the toko the bells on the Protestant Mission pealed forth their call to worship and as he listened to their harmony there came to him a thought. He and Quai Fa had planned their marriage to take place in Canton, but Bruce remembered the motto of his father, "Do it now."

"By Golly I will," he murmured.

Scarcely had the word passed from his lips when Ah Foon stepped from the toko door, ready to go to the Club. As Ah Foon neared him Bruce turned and pointing to the distant spire of the Mission said:

"Ah Foon do you hear those bells? Well they mean that there is a minister there can tie a knot. There is no time like the present. My Dad says 'Do it now.' So that's just what we are going to do. Clarke can wait. We'll go direct to the Mission and get married."

Ah Foon was dumbfounded. He shook his head with dismay. This impulsive American and his sudden way of doing things left him aghast. To a Chinese the idea of a marriage without great feasting and long preparation would never do. He had planned the marriage to be the most brilliant that Canton had seen in many years and he almost broke into tears so earnest was he in his entreaties to Bruce to let him arrange the ceremony.

Quai Fa who stood within the toko heard

them talking and came to the doorway. She listened gravely for a moment, then learning of what it was they talked, dropped her head and turned to go inside, but Bruce ran to her to enlist her on his side. He gently asked her if she were not ready for the ceremony and after a long look at first Ah Foon and then at him said:

"Yes."

Ah Foon looked on in helpless sorrow for he had planned things differently. As Quai Fa uttered the word she looked at her father and misread what was in his mind. Her little heart was torn between two wild emotions, one her love of Bruce, the other, leaving Ah Foon.

Bruce bent over her and their lips met, then she turned to gaze fondly at her father. In the eyes of Ah Foon there was a great sadness. The sight of the pain that she saw in those kindly eyes hurt her for she loved Ah Foon second only to Bruce. Clasping Bruce's hand tightly in hers she drew away from him and stepped to Ah Foon. Her eyes filled as she looked up into his

face. A long moment passed in silence, each gripped in the intensity of their emotions.

Ah Foon's eyes became moist and he turned his head slightly to hide his feelings. It was more than Quai Fa could stand. Still holding Bruce's hand tightly in her own she dropped on Ah Foon's breast, sobbing as though her heart would break.

Her grief at hurting him stiffened Ah Foon and he forced himself to smile. He looked at Bruce who stood beside Quai Fa and nodded his head slightly. As he did so there came another peal from the mission bells. Ah Foon turned his head and looked in the direction from which the sound had come. Standing boldly out against the blazing tropic sky he saw a cross of gold which capped a tall thin spire.

"John Dowling would have it thus," he murmured, "It shall be done this day."

Quai Fa and Bruce raised their heads to look as he spoke the words and their eyes followed

his. Turning from the golden cross that beckoned them they looked at one another.

Quai Fa's tear streaked face lighted with plaintive sweetness and Bruce felt that he would burst with love of her.

He gathered her into his arms fondly and Ah Foon regarded them in silence for the moment. The hurt was still in his heart, but he resigned himself to the loss of her. As he gazed at her there came the thought:

"I have not lost her, I have gained a Son. They shall be with me always." His face lighted with the radiance of this new found joy as he gathered his children to his arms.

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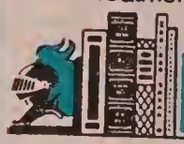

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